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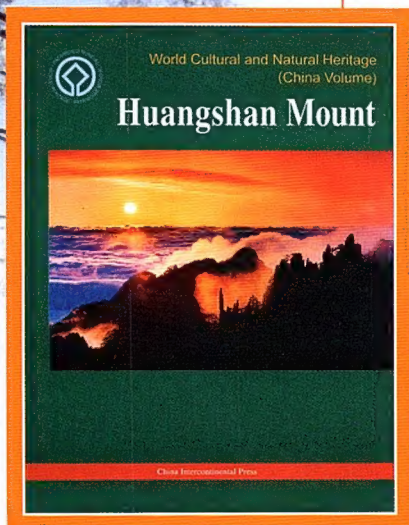
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Mt. Huangshan, situated in the south of Anhui Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.

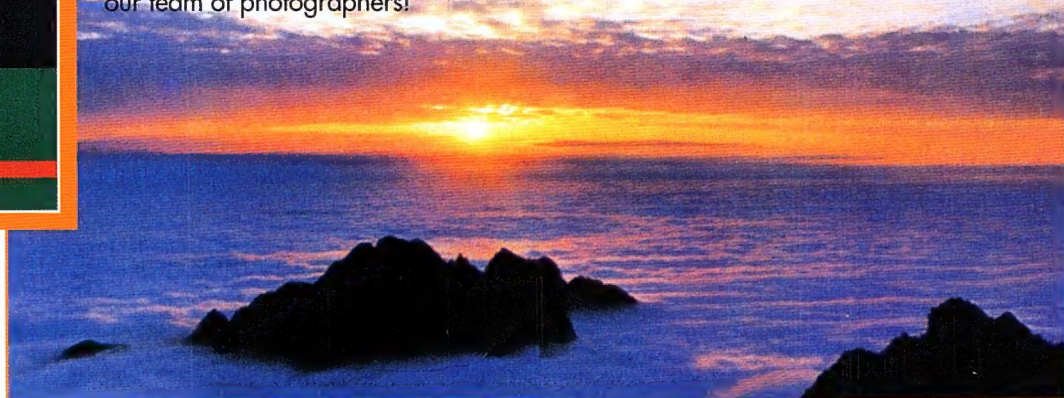
The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!



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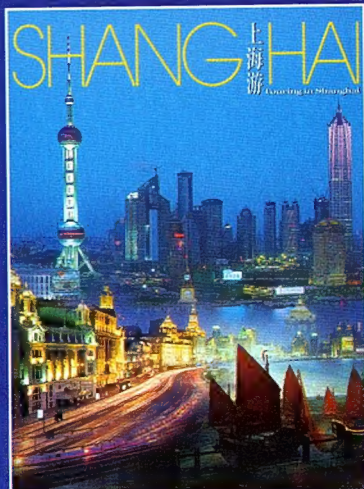
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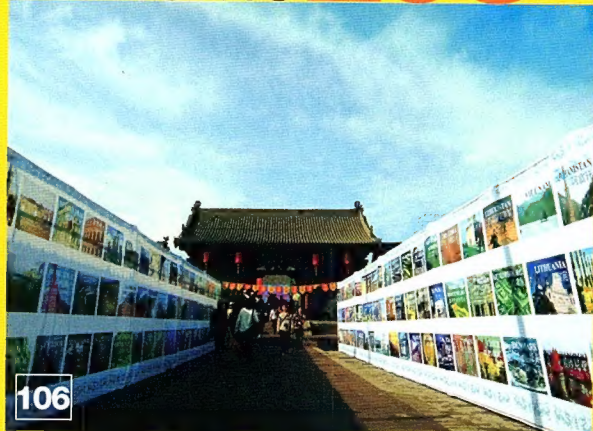
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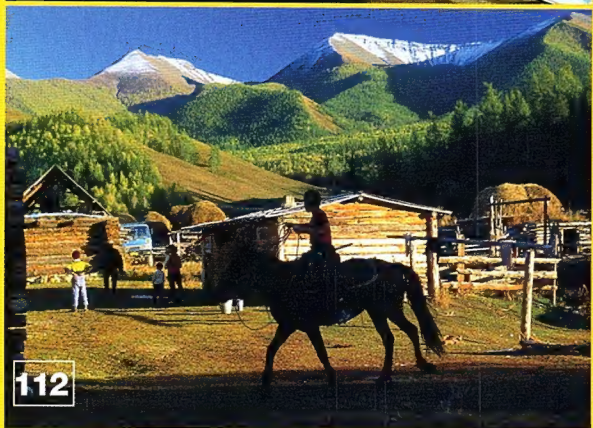
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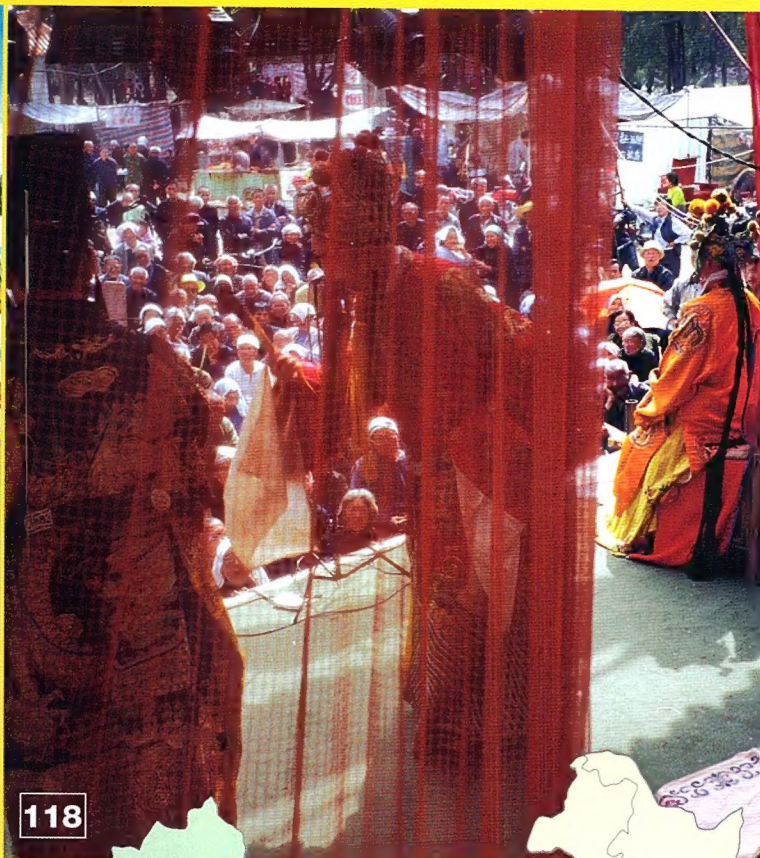
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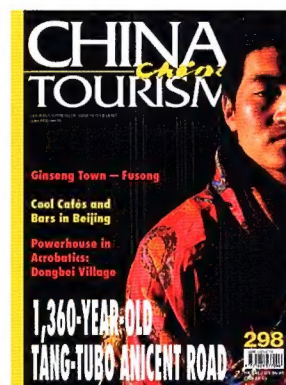
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Publisher: HK CHINA TOURISM PRESS

24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2561 8001 Fax: (852) 2561 8057/ 2561 8196

Editorial Dept., Business Dept., Advertising Dept., Sales Dept. Tel: (852) 2561 8001

China Tourism Photo Library Tel: (852) 2561 8001

E-mail: English Editorial Dept: edit-e@hkctp.com.hk

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Hong Kong China Tourism Ltd. (Licence No. 351850) Tel: (852) 2516 9228

Printer: Sun Wah Printing Factory

Block B, 3/F., 8 Shipyard Lane, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong

Distribution: Australia • Belgium • Brazil • Britain • China •
France • Hong Kong • Japan • Macao • Malaysia •
Netherlands • Singapore • South Korea • Thailand

China Tourism is published six times a year by Hong Kong China Tourism Press

*China Tourism bimonthly magazine is available on the scheduled flights, and at
VIP lounges, guest rooms and counters of the following organisations:*

 CATHAY PACIFIC



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News-stand price: HK \$48/ US \$6.95/ CAN \$8.95

Printed in Hong Kong

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No.298 Jul/Aug 2005

FROM THE EDITOR

Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

About 1,360 years ago, Princess Wencheng of the Tang Dynasty left Chang'an (present Xi'an, Shaanxi) for the Tubo Kingdom, 2,500 km to the west of the Tang capital, to marry the king of Tubo (today's Tibet), Songtsen Gambo.

Both emperors of Tang Dynasty and Tubo Kingdom believed that this political matrimony could strengthen the ties between the two nations, but little did they realise that Princess Wencheng accomplished much more than that.

According to the Records of Tibetan Kings, Princess Wencheng was an outstanding intellectual in construction, astronomy and geology. She and her team of artists and architects brought along technology, improved people's farming and spinning techniques, transformed the art and architecture of Tubo, and most importantly, she took care of people's spiritual needs by promoting Buddhism. To remember Princess Wencheng's noble deeds, people built many statues and temples in her names, and she has continued to be worshipped by people since.

There are many books that write about Princess Wencheng's life, but rarely do they mention about her treacherous journey to Tubo in detail. That's why our photojournalist decided to retrace the princess's steps and walked the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road from the beginning to end. Happy reading.

Tibetan prayer flags (by Shi Baoxiu)



China

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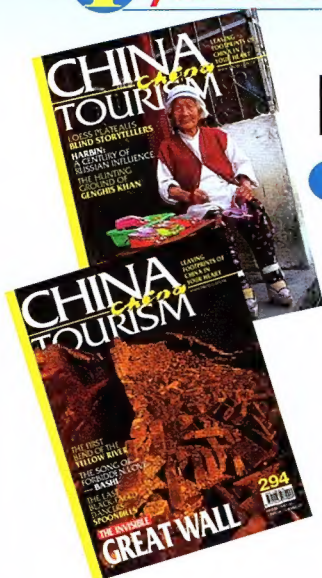
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JUL/AUG



July 13~16

Nadam Fair

Venue: Bortala Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, Xinjiang

What's On: In this Nadam Fair held around Sayram Lake, tourists can watch horse and camel race, and take part in Mongolian dances. They can also visit local market to buy traditional handicrafts and taste Mongolian food.

July 18~20

China Heilongjiang Forest Ecotour Festival

Venue: Yichun, Heilongjiang

What's On: The programme includes inauguration ceremony, theatrical performances, and forest ecotours. There are also markets selling wood carvings, tree-root sculptures and traditional paintings on birch bark.



July 1~3

2005 World Grand Prix Macao Leg

Venue: Macao

What's On: China, Brazil, Germany and Poland will fight for the champion. China will meet Brazil in the final group match of the preliminary round on July 3rd. The winner will advance to the final round of the World Grand Prix to be held in Sendai, Japan on July 13th.

August 8~15

Shoton Festival

Venue: Lhasa, Tibet

What's On: A number of theatrical troupes will gather at Lhasa, and the festival is also known as "Tibetan Opera Festival". Tibetans will go camping, singing and dancing at Norbu Lingka, and watch Tibetan operas.



August 13~28

Qingdao International Beer Festival

Venue: Qingdao, Shandong

What's On: The festival allows tourists to explore the beer culture of Qingdao, the former German concession. The Qingdao Summer Art Festival, Water Sports Competition and Sand Sculpture Competition will also be held during the festival.

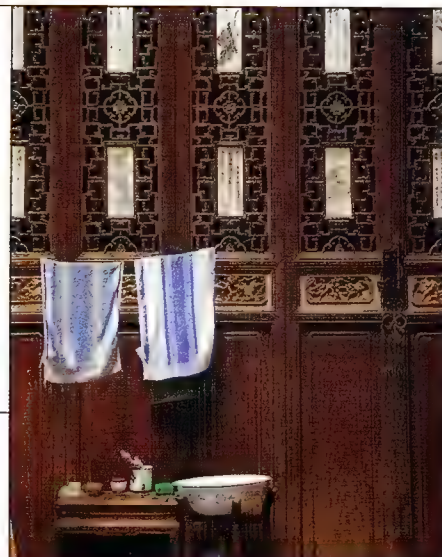


Now till 30 July

Louis XIV — French Art Work Exhibition

Venue: Palace Museum, Beijing

What's On: As one of the programmes of the Year of France in China, 100 pieces of art and cultural relics of the 17th century from the Versailles Palace will be shown in Beijing, featuring the life and family of the French Emperor Louis XIV, the greatest emperor in French history.



Now till July 11

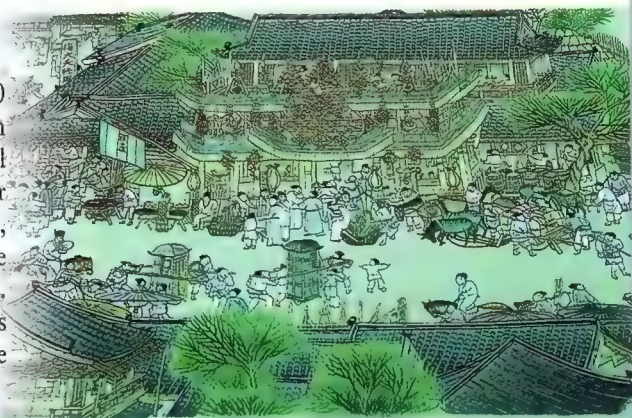
Huizhou Vernacular Architecture Exhibition

Venue: Hong Kong Heritage Museum, Hong Kong

What's On: The exhibition displays more than 120 sets of wood, brick and stone carvings from Huizhou (southern Anhui and northern Jiangxi), all of which are works of fine and delicate craftsmanship. A main hall and a study room in old Huizhou style are also reconstructed to illustrate the features and cultures of the region.

Ancient Village Unearthed in Hebei

An ancient village, apparently buried in natural disaster about 700 years ago, has been unearthed in Hebei. Located near Liumengchun Village in Cangzhou, the village is estimated to be a booming commercial centre in Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties. Copper coins, as well as remains of some pottery vases, bowls, plates and jars, are found at the site. Archeologists found cultural deposits belong to the Song, Yuan and Jin dynasties in 20 pits distributed over a 500 km² area. According to historical documents, this area suffered from four floods and one earthquake at the end of Yuan Dynasty. Archeologists believe the village was ruined in one of these natural disasters.



Chengdu Panda Museum Planned

The world's biggest giant panda museum will be built in Chengdu, Sichuan. China Giant Panda Museum, covering an area of 5,000 m², will be located within the Panda Research Centre. The museum will serve as a venue for promoting giant panda protection. The total population of wild giant panda is about 1,500, with most of them in the mountainous areas of southern and western China.

A Closer Tie between Mainland and Taiwan

An undersea expressway to Taiwan is among the idea of building five tunnels to link islands and major coastal cities in 20 to 30 years time. The road tunnel would leave Fujian for Taiwan. The significance of the expressway to Taipei lies in logistics, which is of great importance in helping Taiwan, Hong Kong and the mainland China to lower their transportation costs.

The other four expressways are: undersea railways linking Dalian in Liaoning with Yantai in Shandong, and Leizhou Peninsula of Guangdong with Hainan; and tunnels linking Shanghai with Ningbo in Zhejiang, and Zhuhai in Guangdong with Hong Kong and Macao.



New Dinosaur Discovery in Ningxia

Several dinosaur fossils are discovered in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Discovered by a farmer on his way to catch hedgehogs on the mountain, the fossils are immediately sent to the local cultural department for research. They are believed to be from a creature that lived 140 million years ago. Archaeologists have started excavating the spot, while the farmer has been hired as the guide of the area.

China to Build Wind Farms Offshore

China plans to make offshore wind farms a key part of its renewable energy programme within two or three decades. The wind turbines, which will be built 50 km out to the sea, will supply clean power to the populous and booming east coast area. China aimed to have 20 GW of wind-generating capacity installed by 2020, equivalent to about 10% of annual electricity consumption at that time. At present the industry is limited by its high costs, with the price of power generated by a 100 MG wind project over two times higher than the equivalent from a coal generator.

Currently the country is looking for more varied energy supplies such as nuclear, wind and hydropower to reduce its reliance on coal. Unlike European wind power leaders, China is not obliged under the Kyoto Treaty to cut its emissions of greenhouse gases. But the government is concerned by the effects of air pollution, much of it from coal-burning power plants, and is keen to boost clean energy.





Macao Planned Underwater Casino

An underwater casino consisting 450 gaming tables and 3,000 slot machines will open in Macao in mid-2008. The casino will be surrounded by water and marine life, consisting deluxe apartment blocks, 2,000 hotel rooms, a shopping mall and a 4,000-seat performance hall. The resort will be located on Macao's Cotai Strip, which developers hope to fashion as Macao's answer to the Las Vegas Strip. Macao is expected to surpass Las Vegas as the world's biggest gambling market this year, with the territory's casinos projected to bring in more than five billion American dollars in gambling revenue.

Nine Metro Lines in Guangzhou by 2010

Guangzhou will have nine Metro lines to cope with the heavy traffic during the 2010 Asian Games. Guangzhou is expected to have 255 km of metro lines by 2010, or nine lines, up from 203 km in the original city plan.



Seventeen Ancient Tombs Found in Inner Mongolia

Seventeen ancient tombs believed to be built in the Warring States Period (403 - 221 B.C.) are found in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The relics experts are surprised by the unique burial style. Nearly at the same place, an ancient village dating back to 4,000 years ago is also discovered. Axes, stone adzes and stone spades, along with some pottery and potsherd are unearthed. The tombs and the village were exposed when a highway is being built. The excavation is expected to be finished in approximately three months.

Old Summer Palace in New Controversy

The authorities have promised to better protect Beijing's Yuanmingyuan Park (the Old Summer Palace) following a series of recent controversies over the running of the park. Beijing cultural relic protection authority and the park's administrators have vowed to improve the management of the site. The Beijing Municipal Cultural Relics Protection Bureau has also pumped more than ¥40 million (US \$4.8 million) into protecting the park over the past four years.



Co-Publishing Dunhuang Documents

China will join France and Britain in publishing the ancient documents written in Tibetan language originally discovered in Dunhuang Grottoes in Gansu. The Tibetan documents, currently kept in the British and French national libraries, are the most valuable ancient archives found in Dunhuang. China has edited and published a major part of the archives in Chinese since the 1990s.

Protecting Manuscripts of Ethnic Groups

China has rescued and repaired about 300,000 old books and manuscripts of minority ethnic groups and published more than 5,000 of these during the past two decades.

These books of different ethnic languages include epigraphs on stones and manuscripts written on silk, bamboo plate and paper. Many of them are mythologies of different ethnic groups, including Mongolian, Tibetan and Kirghiz.



BEIJING

Qianmen to be Pedestrian-Only Commercial Street

Qianmen Avenue, a traditional commercial street in central Beijing, is to be rebuilt into a pedestrian-only street in Ming and Qing architectural style. There are more than 80 traditional Chinese brand stores, former homes of cultural figures and historical relics along the street. One of the most famous spot of the street is Quanjude restaurant, which is world-renowned for its roast Beijing duck. The construction is scheduled to be completed in 2008.

SHANGHAI

Shanghai Airlines to Introduce New Flights

Shanghai Airlines Co., Ltd, in cooperation with the All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd (ANA), has launched three new flights from Shanghai to Nagoya (Japan), Shanghai to Chengdu and Shanghai to Chongqing. The three new flights are the result of cooperation between the two airlines in a code-sharing system.



GUANGDONG

Baiyun Airport to Lower Food Prices

The Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport has passed new regulation to lower the prices of goods, after receiving complaints from the public. The regulation restricts the food price to a three-star hotel standard. Though it only applies to restaurants owned by the airport, the price of other restaurants is expected to be lowered under competitions. The airport will also increase the number of fast food restaurants and supermarkets.



JIANGSU

Nanjing Offers Tours to Follow Lien Chan's Footsteps

Two special tours related to the recent trips to the Chinese mainland by Taiwan politicians Lien Chan and James Soong will soon be in operation. The two tours are called "Trip of Universal Love" and "Trip of Peace". The former is a two-day trip around Nanjing, the latter is a 10-day trip to Nanjing, Shanghai, Beijing, Xi'an and Changsha. All of the places and scenic spots visited by Lien Chan, Kuomintang's chairman, and James Soong, chairman of the People First Party, will be included in the tours.

SHAANXI

Tang Dynasty Theme Park Opens

A Tang Dynasty cultural theme park has opened in Xi'an, Shaanxi. Covering an area of 66 ha, the park is the largest cultural theme park in Northwest China, and also the biggest replication of the Tang imperial garden. With an investment of ¥1.3 billion (US \$156 million), the theme park welcomed more than 50,000 visitors on its opening day.

XINJIANG

Tourist Bus Running in Turpan

Ten tourist buses are now running between major scenic spots in Turpan area, Xinjiang. Connecting the Gaochang Ancient City, Flaming Mountain, Sugong Minaret and other tourist spots, the buses operate from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M. daily.



SHANDONG

Free Bus Connecting Jinan's Scenic Spots

A free bus running between scenic spots in Jinan is available. From now on, with a ticket of Daming Lake, Botu Spring, Thousand Buddha Mountain and Wulong Pool in hands, travellers can get into a free bus running between these four spots.



GANSU

Railway Link to Mogao Grottoes

Mogao Grottoes is 25 km to the southeast of Dunhuang, once a vital caravan stop on the Silk Road that linked China with Central Asia. Travellers currently can only reach the caves by plane or bus, but they can take the train at the end of this year. The 160 km long railway will cost more than ¥600 million (US \$72.3 million), and is expected to open to public by the end of this year. The project, however, has met opposition from relics experts, who have repeatedly warned of the harm a railway and the subsequent increase in visitors may cause.

HENAN

Shaolin Temple Admission Fee Increases

The admission fee of Shaolin Temple has increased from ¥40 to ¥100. This is a package includes admission to Shaolin Scenic Area, Sanhuangzhai Scenic Area and Kung Fu performance.



ANHUI

Huangshan's Tiandu Peak Re-Opened

With an altitude of 1,810 m, Tiandu Peak is the highest peak of Huangshan. After five years of closing for protection, Huangshan's Tiandu Peak is now re-opened. Such protective measure was first introduced in 1980's.

CHINA

Air Macao Opens New Flight

Air Macao operated its second daily flight from Macao to Beijing. Now there are two daily flights departing Macao at 12:00 and 15:10, and arriving Beijing at 19:35 and 22:45 respectively. The return flights depart Beijing at 10:00 and 13:25, and arrive Macao at 13:25 and 19:35. The airline plans to open its third Macao-Beijing daily flight next year.

FEATURE
STORY

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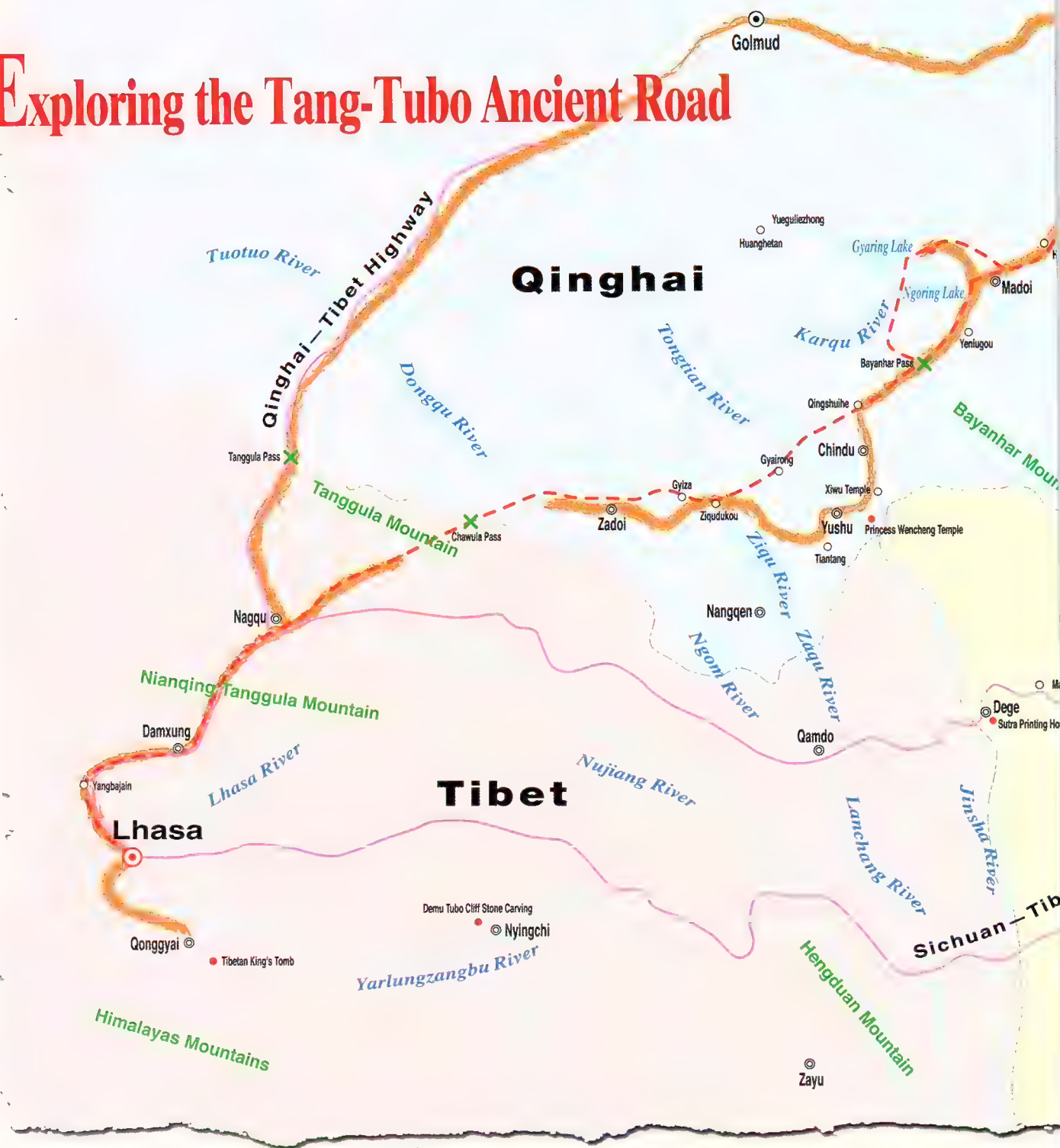
Tracing the Steps of Tang Princess's Departure to Tibet: Tang-Tubo Ancient Road





Tang Princess Wencheng marrying Songtsen Gambo (by Gao Minquan)

Exploring the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



The Tang-Tubo Ancient Road opened 1,360 years ago is one of the most difficult ways ever found. For three quarter of its journey, one has to walk across the Roof of the World (the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau) with an average altitude of above 4,000 m, climb over several highest mountains in the world (like the Anemaqen Mountain, Bayan Har Mountain, Tanggula Mountain, Nianqing Tanggula Mountain), and cross countless great rivers (including the Yellow River, Yangtze River, Lancang River and Nujiang River) as well as wastelands, before



reaching Lhasa of Tibet.

The road is full of risks, and many travellers lost their lives due to oxygen depletion, low pressure, coldness and harsh road conditions.

The Tang-Tubo Ancient Road also reminds people about the two political marriages between the Tang princesses and the kings of Tubo. These fragile girls underwent a painful journey of 2,500 km before finally arrived at the Tibetan King's palace in the Lhasa River Valley.



Chang'an

An International Metropolis of the Middle Ages

1. The Ming architecture in Xi'an
2. The wall mural of a Tang lady

At the east end of the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road is Chang'an, the capital of the Great Tang Empire.

Li Shimin, an ironhanded emperor of great talent and bold vision, procured the opening of the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road. Thanks to the solid foundation laid by his rule, the Tang Empire rose quickly and became one of the strongest countries in the



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



world during the Middle Ages.

Emperor Li Shimin (or Tang Taizong) not only was good at ruling the country, but also accomplished much in handling national and international relations.

He made peace with Tubo (today's Tibet) by marriage. Tang Taizong approved Tubo King Songtsen Gambo's marriage



proposal to Princess Wencheng, which was a critical factor in the future merger of Tibet into the territory of China.

At that time, just as the Great Tang Empire was becoming strong, the Tubo Dynasty rose up on the Tibet Plateau. The ambitious Songtsen Gambo suppressed the riots of the nobles and local powers after repeated wars, and moved the capital from Pibo City (today's Qiongjie) on the south of the mountain to Luoxie (today's Lhasa), founding the sole unified political power in the history of Tibet. Seeing that the kings of Turkey and Tuyuhun were fostering cordial relations with the Tang Empire, this determined young king had the idea of associating with the Tang Empire by marriage in order to boost international status.

When the messenger brought the good news of Empire Tang Taizong's consent to the marriage, Songtsen Gambo immediately assigned his best minister Lu Dongzan to Chang'an in AD 640, bringing generous betrothal gifts.





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

Two Tang Princesses Married to Tubo without Return

When accepting the Tubo's marriage proposal, Empire Tang Taizong decided to confer the title of Princess Wencheng to a daughter of the royal clan and marry her off to Songtsen Gambo. Once appointed by the emperor, the girl, together with her parents, had no other choice. The parents of Princess Wencheng might be in agony, "Why pick our daughter to this remote land?" However, at that time, an imperial girl was to be sacrificed to politics at any time. Worse yet, the hardship and loneliness of being married to an alien land could be combined with political issue. Should the relation between the two nations deteriorate, the princess would be trapped.

In AD 641, Princess Wencheng was on her way to Tibet, and there was 2,500 km of hardship and difficulty waiting for her. Empire Tang Taizong assigned his noble clansman Jiangxia to escort her. In the cry of her parents and siblings, Princess Wencheng went through the West Street of Chang'an on a carriage out of the Xizhi Gate, gradually vanishing on the ancient road. And she never returned to her homeland again.

On the following years of Princess Wencheng's death in AD 680, Tubo proposed for marriage again but was refused. Later in AD 703, Tubo King Tsampo Dumang Pojie, made another proposal and paid a tribute of 1,000 horses and 2,000 liang of gold, but he was died of war soon.

In 707, the new Tubo King Tsampo Tride Songtsen assigned his foreign minister to Chang'an to make an offer of marriage once more. At that time, Emperor Tang Zhongzong, who had been on his throne for less than two years, consented to the offer without hesitation in order to stabilise the frontier and reduce military services. He selected the daughter of noble clansman Li Zongli as his foster daughter and then conferred the title of Princess Jincheng to her. By November of 709, the minister Zan Duo from Tubo led a team of above 1,000 to Chang'an. In January of 711, the marriage team of Princess Jincheng set off. This was the second association between the Tang and Tubo dynasties, 70 years after the marriage of Princess Wencheng to Tubo.

Chang'an—An International Metropolis of the Middle Ages

Although the princesses never returned, their hometown Chang'an soon became an international metropolis thanks to the development of the Tang-Tubo Road and the revival of the Silk Road to the Western Regions. Attracting large numbers of foreigners, Chang'an City grew to an unprecedented scale.

In the flourishing Tang period, there were more than 300 countries and regions associated with China via ambassadors. The court then set up foreign affairs organisations, such as the Honglu Temple (situated at the south of the royal palace, between the Hanguang and Zhuque Gates), Foreign Affairs Department and Guest Reception Office, to receive foreign guests. Their scope of service covered interpretation, guiding,

grant of daily necessities and travel costs.

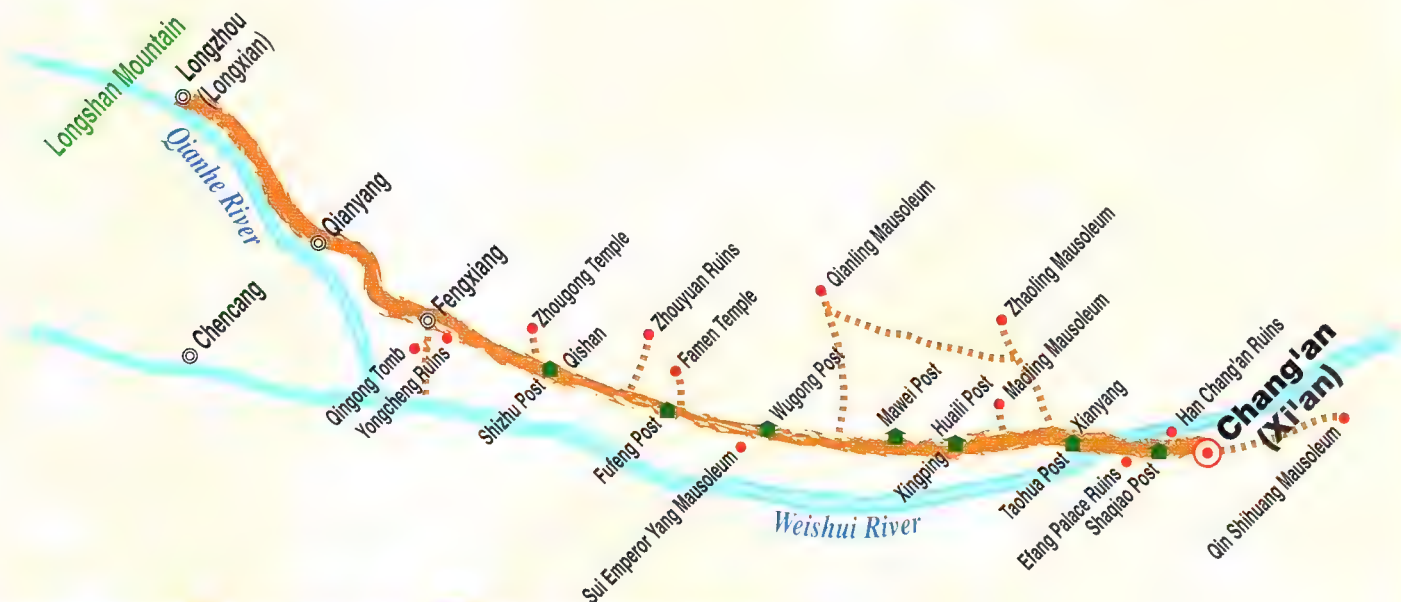
Chang'an City in the Past

Chang'an City in the Tang Dynasty surpassed Constantinople in international status at that time. Accordingly, Chang'an was also flourishing in international trade. There were two markets in Chang'an City on the east and west, both being the distributing centre of commodities. Many foreign businessmen could be found at the west market, where there were many kinds of stores, including clothes, funeral services, medicinal materials, Persian mansion, rein firms, silk firms, balance firms, bran firms, depositories.

The Persian mansion in the west market was a meeting place of businessmen from Persia, ancient Rome and the Western Regions. They dwelled here, sold specialties from Europe and West Asia, purchased Chinese tealeaves, ceramics, silks at the lowest price, and carried them to their respective countries to earn great profits.

1. Princess Wencheng's departure to Tibet (by Gao Minquan)
2. The ruins of Daming Palace of Tang Dynasty. This was the place where emperors would meet foreign ambassadors.
3. The bronze statues of Greater Goose Tower, Xi'an. They are the musicians from the Western Regions.





Guanzhong Passage

The Ancient Imperial Capital of Central Shaanxi

Direction of Ancient Way:

From the Xizhi Gate of ancient Chang'an, through Sanqiao Post, across the Weishui River Bridge at Lingao Post, then to the west along the north bank of the Weishui River, via Xianyang Post, Xingping Post, Mawei Post, Wugong Post, Fufeng, Shizhu Post (today's Qishan), Fengxiang, Qianyang (today's Qianyang County), you can finally arrive at Longban, Qianyuan (today's Longxian County).





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

The Efang Palace of the Qin Dynasty

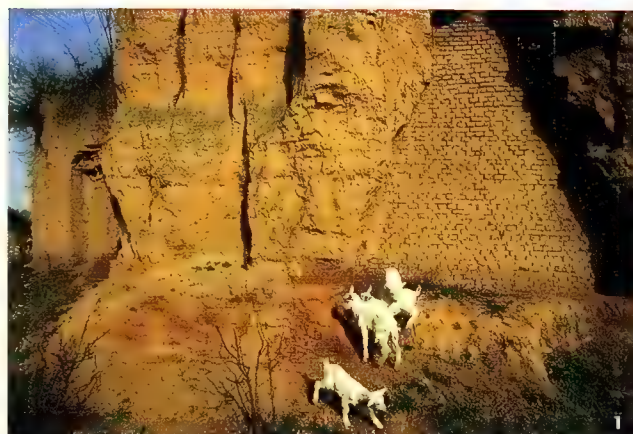
We walked from the starting point of the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road, namely today's Xi'an. At that time, Princess Wencheng left Chang'an and began her one-way journey to the west. She first came to the Silk Road and the east section of the Guanlong South Road of the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road.

The site, where the West Traveller Group statue stands on the Daqing Road, Xi'an, was Kaiyuan Gate of Chang'an City in the Tang Dynasty. More than 1,300 years ago, the Silk Road from Chang'an to the Western Regions and the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau started here. The marriage teams of both Princess Wencheng and Princess Jincheng set off here to begin a 2,500-km arduous tour.

Sanqiao Town, 15 km to the west of the group sculpture was the site of Sanqiao Post in the Sui-Tang period. To the north of the town, less than 500 m over the Long-Hai Railway lies Chang'an City in the West Han Dynasty. At the centre of the relics, a highland bulges, which is the site of the Weiyang Palace, where Emperor Liu Bang once visited. Across the Weishui River is the ancient capital of the Great Qin Empire. Emperor Qin Shihuang, who founded the monarchy of China, once commanded the unifying war across China at the splendid Xianyang Palace. Although the relics of Chang'an City in the Han Dynasty remain today, the imperial palace is nothing but piles of dilapidated tiles and bricks.

Ancient Bridgehead on the Weishui River

Continue to the west to the silent and scenic Feng River where willows were planted along its banks. This place had a



special status, for its west bank was the town of Fengjing (the capital built by King Wenwang in the Zhou Dynasty over 3,000 years ago) and its east bank was the town of Haojing (established by King Wuwang, the son of King Wenwang), which should be the first metropolis ever in ancient Xi'an. These capitals were just 10 km away, connected by an avenue and dependent of each other for about 350 years, until King Zhou Pingwang relocated the capital to Luoyang to dodge the invasion of the Quanxu people.

Going west along the highway for less than three kilometres, we came to the Weishui River Bridge. Across the river is Xianyang City, where high buildings tower densely today. The

1. The ruins of Efang Palace
2. The statues about the Silk Road, Xi'an
3. The north of Weishui River used to be an important pass to Western Regions and Tubo.



end of the Xianyang Bridge was the place where the Chang'an people of the Tang Dynasty parted with their relatives going west. Many sad parting poems were written about the Fengyu Pavilion, including those of Du Fu and Li Bai. When the two princesses were sent off here, the moment should be very touching.

Footprint of Princesses at Mawei Post, Jincheng County

Passing through the Xianyang Bridge, the ancient road turned to the north bank of the Weishui River. After Xianyang Post, the first rest place along the alluvial terrace of the Weishui River is Xingping Post.

Travelling west from Xingping for about 20 km, we got to Maweipo Town. In the Tang Dynasty, there was Mawei Post here. When the two princesses passed through Mawei Post in succession, this was but an ordinary post. However, decades later in AD 755, an earthshaking event happened.

Due to the betrayal of soldiers, Tang Emperor Li Longji, his concubine Yang Yuhuan, ministers and relatives escaped from Chang'an in a hurry, and they swarmed through the Xianyang Bridge to Sichuan. On the way, when they passed through Mawei Post, a horrible rebellion occurred. The escorts thought

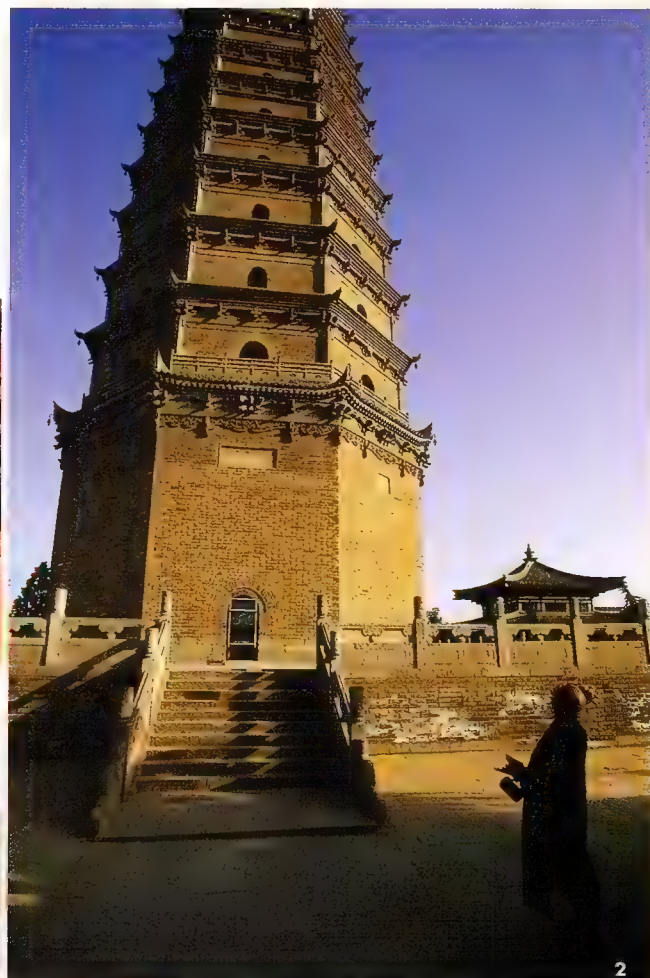
the arch criminal was the Yang's family, so they killed Prime Minister Yang Guozhong, and forced Tang Xuanzong to execute his concubine Yang Yuhuan. The 72-year-old emperor was in despair and had to let the demented soldiers hang his 38-year-old concubine.

The Buddhist Bones in Famen Temple

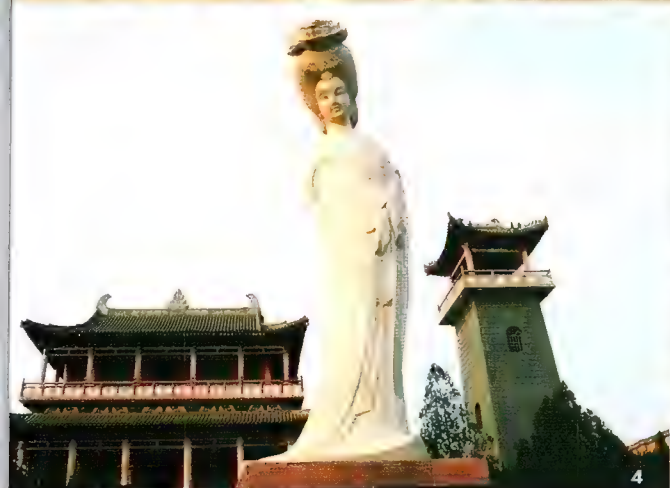
It was about 20 km to travel from the old town of Wugong County to Fufeng. The Famen Temple, 10 km away from the town of Fufeng County, was a world-famous Buddhist holy land. In the East Han Dynasty, Buddha Sakyamuni passed away. Asoka, the king of India and a devoted Buddhist, divided the cremated remains of Buddha into 84,000 shares, and stored them in 84,000 pagodas worldwide. The Famen Temple stored one phalange of Buddha called "Buddhist Relics". Accordingly, the Famen Temple was highly regarded by the past kings. For example, in AD 660 and 704, two grand Buddhist relics-receiving events were held.

Buddhist Relics Revealed Again by Storm

In the late Ming Dynasty, there was a long period of chaos



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



since Li Zicheng attacked Xi'an, and the Buddhist relics were no longer seen. Another 400 years have passed by, the tower began to incline as the foundation collapsed southward. Finally, one day in the 1970s, lightning destroyed the old Famen Temple, and half of its tower collapsed. Having heard the news, the county cultural relics administration immediately assigned someone to the spot. As a result, a mysterious black hole was found in the ruins. When people opened the door, an

1. The local snack of Fengxiang
2. The original Buddhist relics were once hidden underneath the Famen Pagoda.
3. The fertile land of Zhouyuan gave birth to the Qin Dynasty.
4. The mausoleum of the imperial concubine Yang Yuhuan, Mawei
5. The mausoleum of the nobles of Zhou Dynasty



underground treasure palace was uncovered! This palace treasured over 120 pieces of magnificent gold wares and silverwares, 17 rare glass wares and 16 colourful ceramic wares. More surprisingly, four pieces of Buddhist relics, instead of one as recorded in the history book, were found in the treasure box!

Since then, the Famen Temple in Fufeng became famous, attracting both monks and masses.

From Wugong, Fufeng to Qishan and Fengxiang on the west, the ancient road was spread in an especially important region in the Chinese history—Zhouyuan. Fertile lands were opened up here to make it the cradle of the Zhou nationality.

Zhou Jidan (or Zhou Gong), was an accomplished philosopher. When the emperor died in his youth, his son (Zhou's nephew) was still a baby. Zhou Jidan acted as Prince Regent for seven years, assisting the young prince loyally until the prince ascended the throne in his teens. During this period, he had put down the rebellions of some feudal states, and also laid down the cardinal guides and virtues between the king and ministers. He established feudal hierarchy, hereditary system,

and the social institutions. Zhou Gong had extraordinary status and influence in the Chinese history.

From Qishan County, we passed by the Zhouyuan Square in the west of the town. We headed forth for seven kilometres further to the Zhou Gong Temple. Most of the existing halls were rebuilt in the Qing Dynasty.

The ancient road from Qishan to Fengxiang County was almost coincident with the highway today. In the war against An Lushan under the leadership of Tang Suzong, Xijing was set up in Fengxiang in AD 757.

Qingong Tomb: The Glory of the Former Qin Dynasty

In fact, the most eminent period of Fengxiang was former Qin far in the Spring and Autumn Period.

The Qingong Tomb discovered outside the county town was 60 m long, 40 m wide and 24 m deep; the perimeter above the tomb was above 300 m! This is second to none among the imperial tombs ever excavated in China! The Ma Wang Dui



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



Tomb in Changsha, Hunan, is only 1/20 of its size; the Yin Shangwang Mausoleum in Anyang, Henan, is just 1/10.

Many coffins arranged around the burial chamber were those buried alive with the dead. The tomb of Qin Mugong, one of the Five Powers of the Spring and Autumn Period, was

1. Fengxiang, west of Zhouyuan, was where the Qin empire flourished.

2. Zhouyuan Square, west of Qishan

3. The bronze vessels in Zhouyuan Square



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



situated on the southeast corner of the county town. The tomb guard pointed at the three small tombs on the south and told us those were the tombs of the three virtuous ministers buried along with the emperor. Before his kingship was established, Mugong was eager to seek talented persons. As a result, with the assistance of his able ministers, such as Bai Lixi, Jian Shu, he expanded the territory of the Qin state to the west bank of the Yellow River and the central part of Gansu Province today, and turned Qin into a power in that period. However, before his death, he ordered 177 persons, including the ministers and concubines to be buried with him.

Ancient Gate and Road of Longzhou Prefecture

Leaving Fengxiang, we came to Liulin Town in less than 10 km, which was the origin of the Xifeng wine with a history of over 1,000 years. Through Qianyang County, we came to Longxian County, which was at the westernmost end of Guanzhong. Shenquan is six kilometres to the west of the town of Longxian County, where the road forked. We headed northwest for about 20 km and came to Guguan Town, entered the mountain along the path to the southwest, and came to the site of the Dazhen Gate in the Han and Tang dynasties after about four kilometres. The westward team of Princess Wencheng in the early Tang Dynasty should have passed by the road from the Dazhen Gate to Malu. This

ancient road surmounts the Long Mountain with an altitude of above 2,000 m.

We continued our journey northward and arrived at the town of Qingshui County via Qinting. Qingshui was the first county town of Gansu across the Long Mountain along the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road. In the mid and late Tang Dynasty, this was an important Tang-Tubo boundary mark.

1. Longmen Cave of Longxian County was the birthplace of ancient Daoism.
2. Qingong Tomb
3. Guanshan animal husbandry has raised horses since the Qin Dynasty.
4. Ancient stone carvings at the Zhougong Temple





Weishui Passage

Paradise Shared by Buddhists, Daoists and Confucianists

Direction of Ancient Way:

Qingshui County — Tianshui County (Shanggui County in the Tang Dynasty, in the jurisdiction of Qinzhou Prefecture) — Gang County (Fuqiang County in the Tang Dynasty) — Wushan County (town of Longxi County in the Tang Dynasty) — Longxi (town of Xiangwu County in the Tang Dynasty, in the jurisdiction of Weizhou Prefecture) — Weiyuan County (Weiyuan County in the Tang Dynasty) — Lintao County (Didao County in the Tang Dynasty, in the jurisdiction of Linzhou Prefecture)

The ancient road extended southwest along the Niutou River Valley. The valley became more and more narrow to the south, but suddenly it opened at Shetang, where the Weishui River was seen flowing from the west to the east.

Fu Xi in the Ancient Temple

The ancient road crossed the Weishui River Bridge from Shetang via Beidaobu, and then turned west to Tianshui City, an important town upstream of Weishui River. The history of Tianshui was closely associated with the ancestors of Emperor Qin Shihuang, because this was the early cradle and base of the Qin Dynasty, and also known as Qinzhou Prefecture.

Tianshui was a historically famous city, where you could see many ancient buildings. Fu Xi Temple could be dated back to the remote antiquity. This temple faced southward, in which the statue of Fu Xi stood at the high platform at the centre of the hall. Brown skinned and barebacked, he had a ring of leaves on the waist. Holding an Eight Diagrams disc in the right hand, the figure looked robust and forthright like a sturdy man. Among

the "Five Emperors" known to people, Fu Xi should be the most intelligent and powerful one. Not only had he domesticated wildlife, but he also invented farming techniques, created the pictograph and calendar. He was the first and foremost spiritual leader who brought civilisation to mankind.

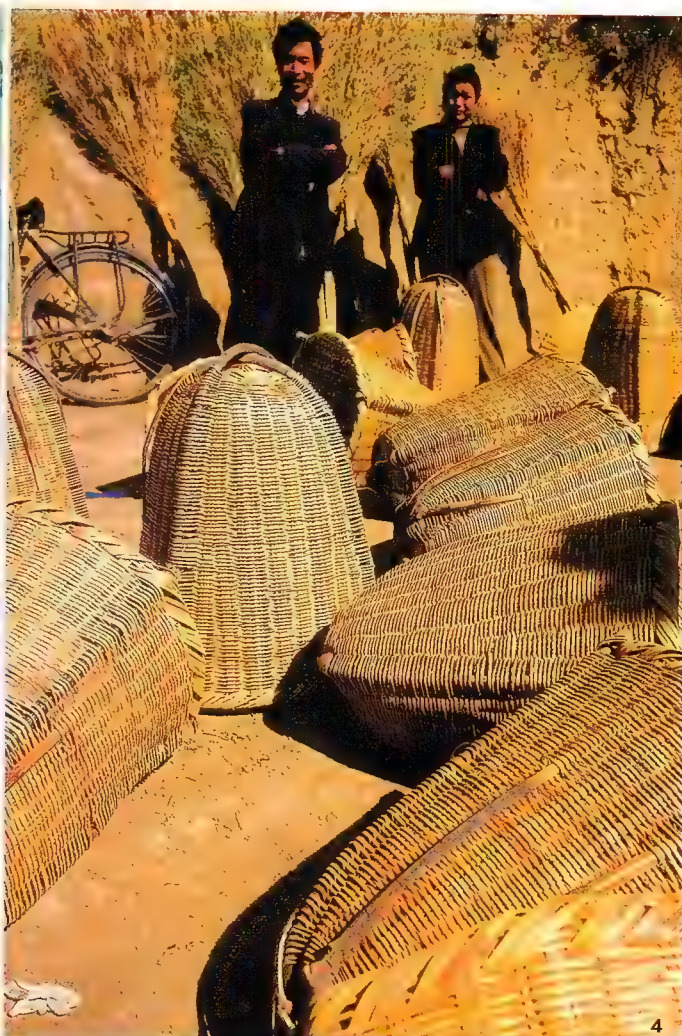
On the other hand, Nu Wa, the younger sister of Fu Xi, was worshipped at Longcheng Town in the north of Qin'an County.

On the second day in Tianshui, we visited the Buddha Caves deep in the Qinling Mountains. Below the Maiji Cliff, a 50-ft-high figure of Buddha leaned against the cliff; the eyes were above three feet long, looking down kindly at all mortals passing by. A Bodhisattva stood on both sides, smiling. When we looked upward, the fan-shaped cliff, full of Buddha caves from the ground to the peak and interconnected by corridors and hanging ladders of 12 levels, amazed us.

When we climbed up level by level, we were frightened. The Maiji Mountain has been praised for its exquisite and vivid clay sculptures. Since the South and North Dynasties through the Qing Dynasty, over 190 caves had been dug, creating 7,800 statues of different sizes. Many of them are still firm despite of



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



1. The statue of Fu Xi
2. Nu Wa was worshipped at Longcheng Town in the Qin'an County.
3. Muslim ladies are sun-drying their lamb skin.
4. These pointy straw baskets have been used by people who live near the Qin Great Wall of Gansu since the Qin Dynasty.
5. The preserved meat of Longxi County has been famous since ancient times.



the long history.

From the Maiji Mountain, we went out of the urban area of Tianshui along the earth and stone road that almost coincided with the ancient road, went up the mountain via Fenghuang Xiang, and entered Gangu. Then, when we were going down the mountain at Baijiawan along the circular highway, we saw the wandering Weishui River again. Gangu City was situated in the plain on the south beach of the Weishui River, totally a modern new city without any trace of ancient features.

At dawn, we went south to the Daxiang Mountain Cave, which was created in the North Wei Dynasty and accomplished in the flourishing Tang period. It was originally a Buddhist holy land, but in the Ming and Qing dynasties, with the rise of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, it became the fairyland of these believers.

Fiery-Red Sandstone Cliff

On the following day, we headed west along the ancient road on the south bank of the Weishui River, through West 10-mile Post and then West 20-mile Post, where posts were set up in

ancient times to receive businessmen, monks, messengers and postmen from China, Western Regions and Tubo. When we drew near West 30-mile Post, the sandstone cliff on the south of the ancient road turned fiery red suddenly, and the mountain turned sharp. On this red sand cliff, overhead caves and temple complexes appeared.

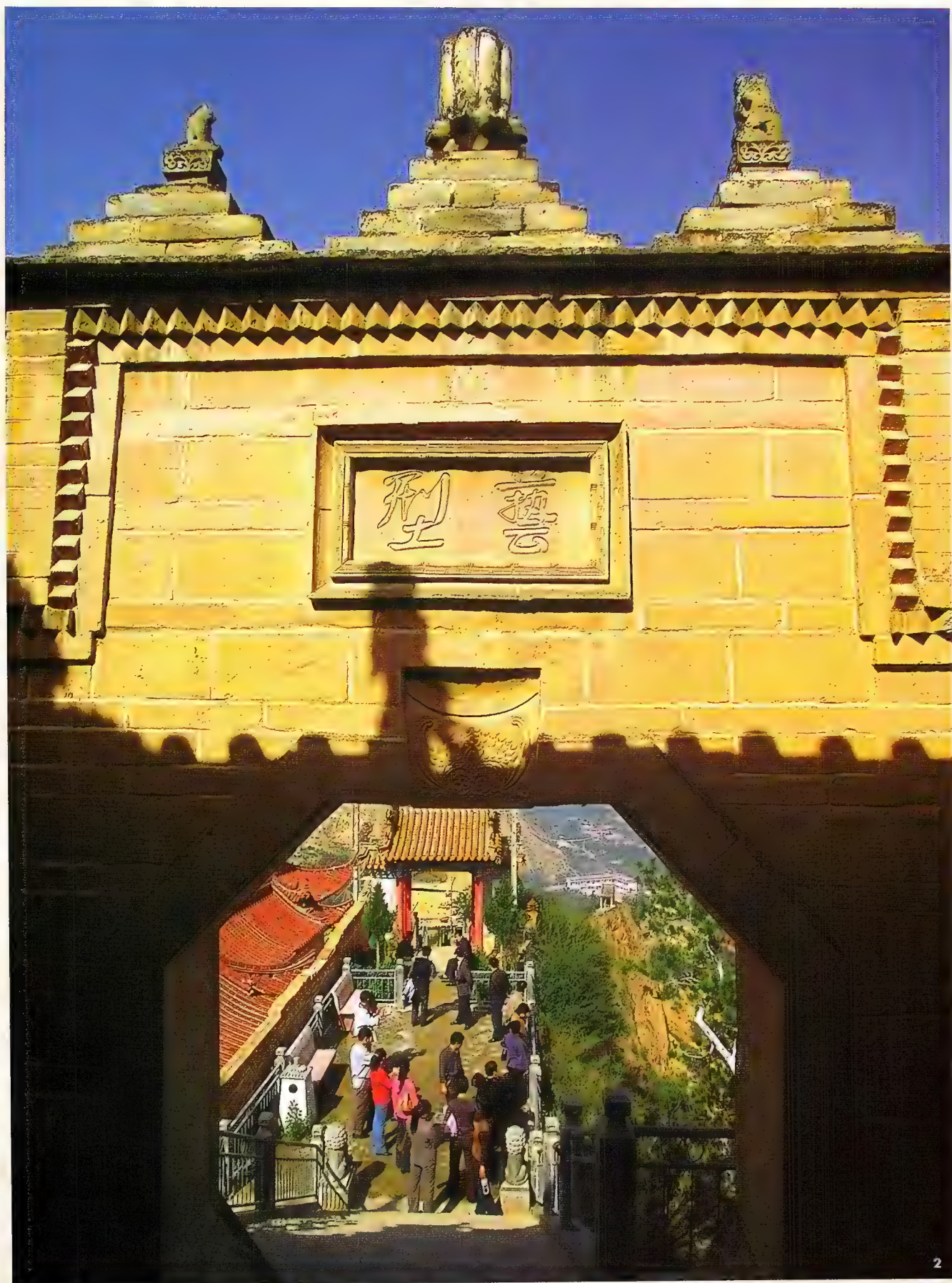
Centuries-Old Water Curtain Cave at Lashao Temple

From the Huagai Temple, we passed by West 40-mile Post and came to Luomen Town, namely Luomen Chuan in the Tang Dynasty, in the territory of Wushan County. We headed north from Luomen Town, and travelled 15 km from the Weishui River to the grotto group at the Water Curtain Cave.

At this moment, the rising sun was shining on the Lashao Temple in the opposite side. Though the buildings of the temple had been destroyed in wars, the embossed Buddha statues on the

1. Maiji Mountain of Tianshui is a holy Buddhist site.
2. Daxiang Mountain of Gangu

Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road





precipice remained intact. The 40-m-high Sakyamuni statue was created in the North Wei period, enjoying a unique position in China for its gigantic size and workmanship.

The town of Wushan County is a completely new town. We came to ancient Shandan Town six kilometres to the west of the county town, which is now known for its jade wine cups. The North Mountain in Wushan County produced black jade, and the wine cup made from this material can reflect the dark red colour of wines. Hence, the business of making this wine cup is very popular here.

From Shandan Town, we went north to the town of Longxi County in the evening. Longxi has been a major county in the past. The Weiyuan Complex stood at the town centre was tall

and impressive.

Li's Palace of Dragon King in Longxi

There is a Li's Palace of Dragon King at the north gate of the town of Longxi County, which was created during the reign of Li Shimin. At that time, 1,899 dragons engraved in stone, brick

1. The grotto hidden deep in Danxia Mountain is now the holy land of Daoists.
2. Huagai Temple built on a cliff, Gangu
3. The stone lion underneath the engraving
4. Lashao Temple has the largest Sakyamuni's engraving on the cliff.



and wood were embedded in all buildings of the whole palace. Thanks to the construction of the palace, Longxi was increasingly eminent, and became an important town on the Silk Road in the Tang Dynasty.

During the Qing Dynasty (1866), the rebel Hui people burned the palace after they captured Longxi. Today, all the buildings were rebuilt in recent years except the Toutian Gate Archway and a hall of the palace.

Li Family Were the Offspring of Hu Tribe

The Han nationalities and ethnic minorities had inhabited the upstream areas of the Weishui River since the Zhou and Shang dynasties. The extensive intermarriage and cultural fusion had given birth to many heroes, like the legendary Fu Xi, ancestors of Qin emperors, General Li Guang (Han Dynasty), Zhao Chongguo, famous general Jiang Wei (Three Kingdoms period) and Li Shimin.

Historians who analyse the cultural character of the Li family and the Tang Dynasty see the Tang Dynasty as a cultural melting pot. Though the Li families were said to be the descendants of the Han nationality, they were heavily influenced by the traditions of Hu Tribe (A Northern tribe in ancient China). Since the wives of Li Shimin and his grandfather and father were Hu people, the customs of the family were closer to its custom. Even the royal families have the custom of

“marrying the widow of one’s brother or father”. For instance, Li Shimin once took the wife of his elder brother as his concubine, and Tang Gaozong married Wu Zetian, a concubine of his father Tang Taizong. In particular, Tang Xuanzong snatched his daughter-in-law Yang Yuhuan from his son. It could be seen that people broke through the traditional Confucian ethics during the Tang Dynasty, and the relationship between sexes was the most open in the Chinese history.

Death over Living on Zhou’s Aid

We went west to Shouyang Town from Longxi. Many women crowded on both sides of the ancient town, scrubbing roots of pilose asiabell. I walked into a courtyard and smelt the strong fragrance of traditional Chinese medicines. The cement ground in the courtyard was full of gray roots of pilose asiabell, and below the eaves were milkvetch roots and licorices. Shouyang appeared to be a town of traditional Chinese medicine.

The Shouyang Mountain near Shouyang Town was the hiding place of the upright brothers Bo Yi and Shu Qi during the early Zhou Dynasty. They were princes of the Guzhu State. When Zhou Wuwang eliminated the Shang Dynasty, they came to this isolated mountain, and lived on a potherb called swallowwort root. They thought they led a noble life until one day, when they were picking swallowwort roots in the





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

mountain, they met a cowherd. The girl was surprised to ask, "Why do you eat the potherb only and do not eat grain?" The brothers answered solemnly, "We are not the citizens of Zhou, and we don't eat the grain in the Zhou's territory." The girl laughed and said, "The potherb you are eating is also the property of Zhou Dynasty, why do you still eat it?"

The brothers were too ashamed to response and they eventually starved themselves to death.

The Ancient Road of Taohe along the Qin Great Wall

We arrived in Weiyuan, which name implied that the journey along the Weishui River was about to end.

The ancient road turned over an earth highland from the northwest of the county town, crossed the Yu River at the source of the Weishui River, and then turned up the road circling the Wushu Mountain. This was the division of the basins of the Weishui River and the Tao River. Five kilometres further, we came to a village called Qinwang, whose name was derived from the Great Wall built by Emperor Qin Shihuang; yet, the Great Wall no longer existed.



1. Shaoyang Town is now the town of traditional Chinese medicine.
2. The statues to remember the two noble princes, Bo Yi and Shu Qi.
3. The Weishui River Bridge was built in Ming Dynasty.
4. The source of the Weishui River—Wushu Mountain





Hehuang Passage

Historical Corridor Where Different Ethnic Groups Meet

Direction of the Ancient Way:

Lintao County (town of Didao County in the Tang Dynasty, in the jurisdiction of Linzhou Prefecture; the Lintao army was stationed here)—Guanghe County (Daxia County in the Tang Dynasty, with Daxiachuan Post on the west)—Linxia City (Baohan in the Tang Dynasty, in the jurisdiction of Hezhou Prefecture)—Lianhua Town (town of Fenglin County in the Tang Dynasty)—Bingling Temple (garrison area of Fenglin Gate in the Tang Dynasty)—Gushan Town, Minhe (town of Longzhi County in the Tang Dynasty)—Ledu County (Huangshui County in the Tang Dynasty, in the jurisdiction of Shanzhou Prefecture, office of the Gansu Right Military Superintendent was in the town)—Xining City (Shancheng County in the Tang Dynasty, a famous city on the west frontier in the Tang Dynasty).

Lintao War—Fended off 100,000 Soldiers of Tubo

Lintao City faces the running Tao River and is a fertile land. In October of 715, Tubo invaded the city and later Wei Yuan, but was finally expelled to the west of the Tao River by the still-powerful Tang army. However, half a century later, the Tang Dynasty was like a sick old man. As a result, Tubo made a stormy assault in Lintao, and then to the west of the Longshan Mountain as well as to the upstream of the Weishui River quickly. Tubo even once captured Chang'an City. The marriage of Princess Wencheng and Princess Jincheng could maintain the

Tang-Tubo relations for a while, but strong national power was the key to good relations with neighbouring countries.

Going over the Tao River, we entered Kangle County, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, and then arrived at the town of Guanghe County. In the villages and towns we passed through many mosques. The west of the Tao River was a Muslim world.

Guanghe County, called Daxia County in the Tang Dynasty, had Daxiachuan Post at five kilometres to the west of the county town. This should be a place run through by the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road. From Guanghe, we travelled 20 km west to Hezheng County and finally came to Linxia.

Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



1. The Daxia River at the east of Linxia City
2. The delicious bakery of Linxia City
3. Linxia is a Muslim world where mosques can be seen everywhere.



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



Why the Hui People Settled in Linxia?

Linxia City today is the town of the government of Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, and one of the areas densely populated by the Hui people in China. The name came from its vicinity to the Daxia River.

The Hui people were first settled in Linxia because of Genghis Khan. Among the past kings of China, Genghis Khan was the sole extreme expansionist. His nomadic nature drove him to break free from regional boundaries. Having occupied Central Asia and West Asia, the Yuan army brought the captured craftsmen, soldiers and dignitaries who pledged allegiance into the Hui Corps, to the battlefield against the South Song citizens. These Hui people were called the Semu people in the Yuan history, because their eyeballs were brown, while that of the Mongolians and Han people were black.

After Kublai Khan moved the capital to Beijing in 1260, his greatest worry was the stability of the northwest, because the four major Mongolian khan states were fighting each other without stop in the Western Regions. Thereupon, the wise Kublai Khan learned from the ruling experience of the Han and Tang dynasties and re-organised the scattered Hui forces into the Scout Red Forces, fighting in wartime and farming in peacetime.

The Scout Red Forces spread all over the northwest provinces. They defended the country, and cultivated many devastated farmlands caused by wars. The Scout Red Forces around Linxia grew quickly by marrying local women and doing business—one of their best undertakings. Moreover, they continued to believe in Islam as before. Seven hundred and thirty years later, Linxia City today, together with Dongxiang Autonomous County, Jishishan Bao'an-Salar Autonomous County, Yongjing, Hezheng, Guanghe, Kangle and Linxia's

near-by counties, has become a paradise for the offspring of the Moslem immigrants from the Western Regions.

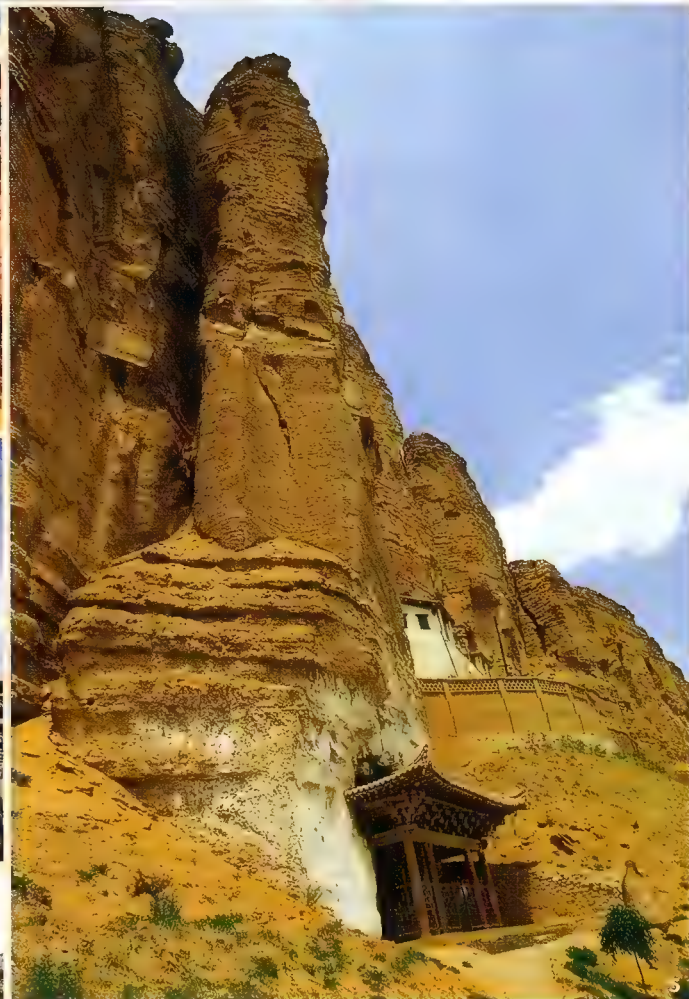
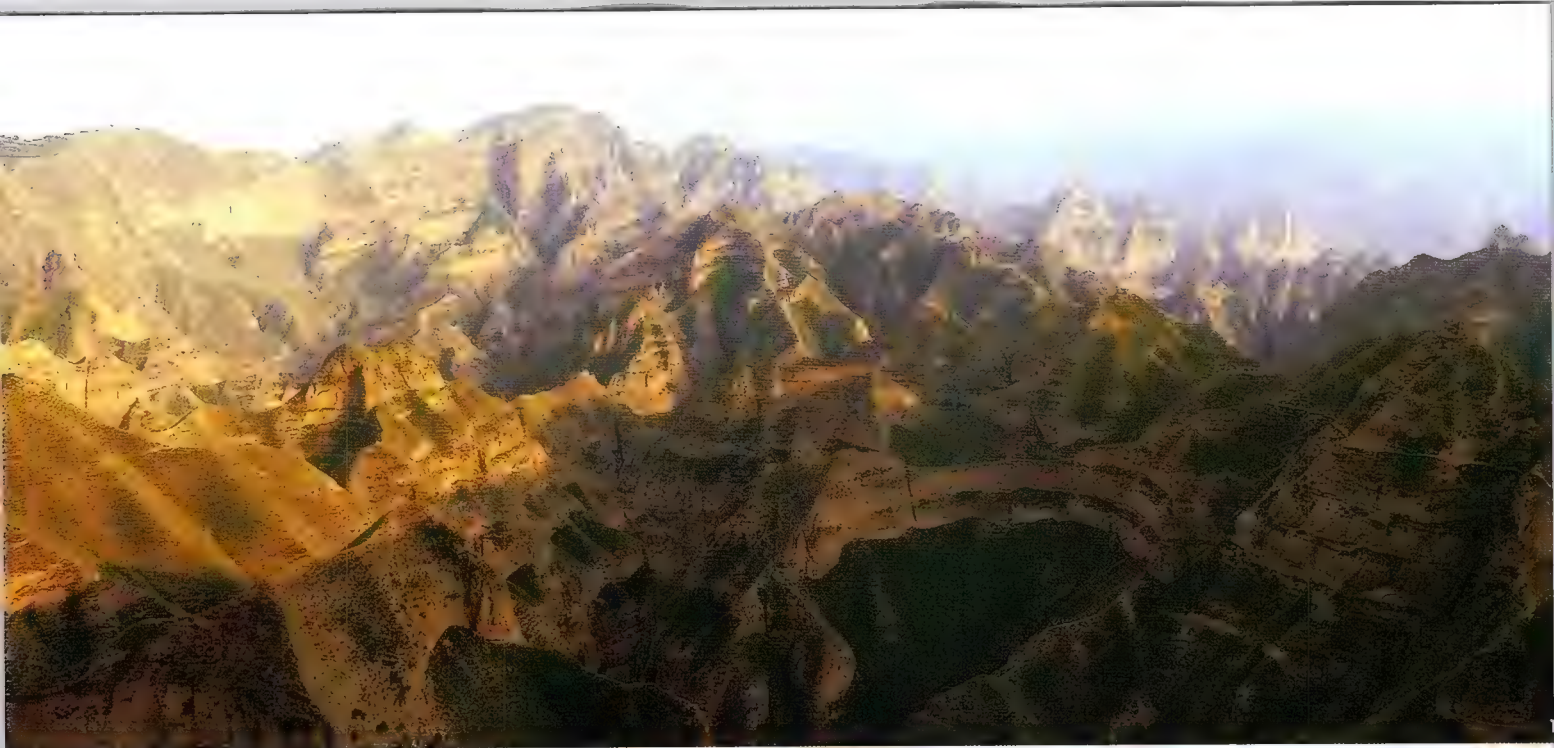
The Hui People Are Business Experts

When we crossed the Daxia River Bridge and entered the urban area of Linxia City, a strong flavour of beef and mutton assailed the nostrils. In the streets and lanes, white hats could be seen everywhere, and women were wearing green, black and white veils. There was one mosque on almost every single street. According to the religious practitioners of Linxia Prefecture, there were above 2,000 mosques in the seven counties and Linxia City of Quanzhou Prefecture. Of course, these included temples of the Dongxiang, Baoan and Salar nationalities, because these nationalities also believed in Islam.

The Ancestral Handicrafts of Linxia

The brick-carving art is popular in Linxia. The Hongyuan Garden, Donggong Hall and Great Gongbei in the city were known collectively as the museum of the brick carving art with their unique styles. For example, Great Gongbei was the site of the mausoleum built by the Muslims in Linxia for their ancestors. Brick carvings on all buildings here were solemn and generous. The Donggong Hall was the residence of a neoteric warlord, where exquisite carvings were widespread from the entrance door, screen wall, yard walls, roofs to corridors.

1. Some schools of Dongxiang are taught in Arabic.
2. A tradition mosque with typical ancient Chinese architecture
3. The Muslim school at Mantianling
4. The ancient barrack



1. A typical Danxia landscape can be seen from the top of Mantianling.
2. Sheep's heads are sold at Maying Town.
3. The exquisite brick-carvings on a pagoda in Linxia
4. It is said that the ancient temple in Gushan was built by Princess Wencheng.
5. The Baima Temple across the Huangshui River used to teach and practice Tibetan Buddhism.
6. The painted pottery of Liuwán



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

Flooded by a Reservoir

Along the Fenglin Gate ancient road via Hujia and Fengtangjia, we arrived at Lianhua Town on the east bank of the Yellow River after a travel of 30 km. The town was the town of Fenglin County in the Tang Dynasty. Today, the ancient Fenglin Gate was submerged by the Liujiaxia Reservoir built to intercept the Yellow River. In the grotto of the Bingling Temple, the "Record of Lingyan Temple" stone inscription was still kept, which was left over by Chief Censor Cui Lin (the head of the mission to Tubo) in the Tang Dynasty.

The grotto was located by the Danxia Mountain. These bald peaks resembled dense bamboo shoots, filling the north bank of the Yellow River. The sitting Buddha was very grand, with a height of over 40 m from the feet to the top.

I was told that, Princess Wencheng once lived in the Bingling Temple for a while when she passed the Yellow River at the Fenglin Gate. She worshipped the Buddha here, and had the craftsmen of the temple to build a three-metre-high Buddha in her name. Since the grotto was too low in elevation, floating silt buried it after the construction of a reservoir in 1958.

At dusk, we had already climbed on the main ridge of the Chenjia Mountain, which was called the "Mantian Ridge" in the Tang Dynasty. It stretched from east to west all the way to Gushan in Minhe County, Qinghai. When we came to Chuancheng Town at the boundary of Gansu and Qinghai provinces, Minhe County was ahead of us in less than a half-mile walk.

There was a platform on the peak on Wangtai Town's side nearby, which was passed by Princess Wencheng. The cement ground of the platform was about one-third hectare. The platform on one side of the square was wrapped firmly by square walls laid with blue bricks, and only the castle wall on the top kept its original state. It was told that the platform was initially a beacon tower on the ancient road in the Tang Dynasty. It was mentioned in the epigraph that Princess Wencheng once passed by here, and this might be the sole record about the trace of the Tang princess in our whole journey.

The Princess Wencheng Temple in Gushan Town

From the platform via Chuancheng Town, we came to the boundary of Qinghai. And the first village that welcomed us was Jieguanling Village. There was probably a post that received officials of the court here. We came to Gushan at noon. A gate

was built outside the castle wall of the town, which read "Gushan Post". The high and thick fortress walls still remained, but the residents used them as courtyard walls. It was told that the Shifo Temple to the east of the wall was built under the instruction of Princess Wencheng when she passed by Gushan.

About two kilometres to the north of Gushan Town, there was a village called Beigucheng, which was the site of Longzhi County in the Sui-Tang period.

Today, a reservoir is built in front of the mountain, and the village is now a water town. Inside and outside the village, tiles and bricks in the Sui-Tang period can be found everywhere. Rumors have it that in 1985, the villagers excavated several pots of ancient money when digging a foundation, weighing 30 kg in total. This discovery proved that the region of Gushan and

Gubeicheng was an important channel to Tubo and Hexi in the Sui-Tang period.

Ledu County

We went north to Minhe along the highway and then directly onto the expressway, passed by the frightening Laoya Gorge. The Laoya Gorge ancient road, though opened to traffic in the Tang Dynasty, could only accommodate a single horse in many sections. The horse parades of the two Tang princesses could hardly get through this difficult road. Accordingly, this road could only be an auxiliary line of the Tang-Tubo

Ancient Road. Today, highways, expressways and railroads have been developed on this dangerous road, making it the first trunk road between Gansu and Qinghai.

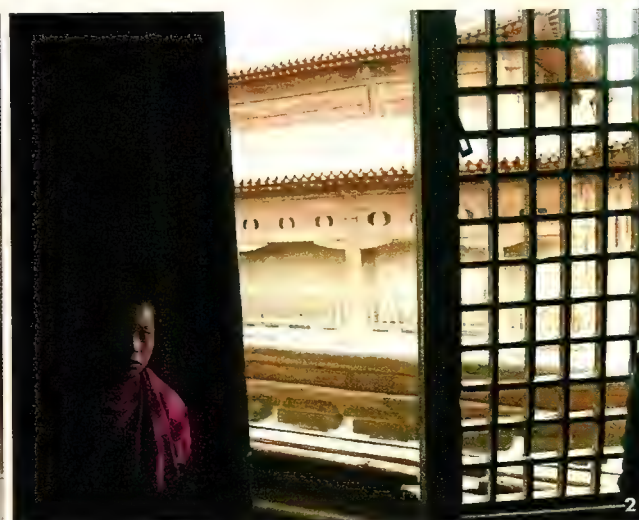
Driving across the 40-km expressway from Minhe to Ledu took us just 20 minutes, but it might take up to three days by horse ride during ancient times.

The town of Ledu County was charming with the Huangshui River running through it. The county town was called Nianbo.

Liuwan Painted Pottery

More than 4,000 years ago, the ancient people had already developed the Huangshui River basin with simple stoneware. For example, the painted pottery of the Machang type got its name from its first discovery at Machangyuan in Minhe County, Qinghai, in 1924. In 1974, the major discovery of painted pottery in Liuwan, Ledu County, made the painted pottery of the Machang type popular. Liuwan is not the name of a village but of a hillside on the north bank of the Huangshui River, Gaomiao Xiang, Ledu County. In 1974, the local commune





excavated a grave piled with bones and painted cans. From 1974 through 1978, a total of 872 sites and graveyards of the Machang type were excavated, containing more than 37,000 pieces of pottery, stoneware, bone-ware and ornaments. Such great gain in one cultural site was probably second to none in the world's archaeological history.

Archaeologists determined that large number of ancient people must be engaged in hunting, herding, planting and textile processing back then. It could also be inferred that the ancient people who lived and worked in Liuwan, Ledu and even the whole Huangshui River basin were probably the ancestors of the Qiang people.

The Tubo people in the Tang Dynasty, or the offspring of the Qiang people, were against the Han people in the central plains. The region here was thus became a hotspot of contest between Tang and Tubo.

There was still an important tourist attraction in Ledu, the Qutan Temple 40 km to the south of the county town. This temple was different from all Buddhist temples in the Qinghai-Tibet region, because its architectural layout was symmetrical. The most individualised artwork in the temple was the murals in the Ming and Qing dynasties with a total area of 4,000 m². Their ink-wash painting technique and style varied greatly from Tangka paintings of other Buddhist temples.

Flowers Festival at the Wufeng Mountain

Apart from Ledu, we went north to Huzhu County to learn the customs of the Tu people.

Huzhu is the sole Tu autonomous county in China. The county town is Wei yuan Town, with four crossing major streets, and a bell tower of the Ming dynasty at the centre. The famous barley wine was originated from this town. This wine is pure and strong, suitable for men of the Tibetan, Mongolian and Tu nationalities.

We sat on the steps of the cross road, watching the scenery leisurely. Tu women, regardless of age, dressed up in red,

yellow, green, blue and purple for the June Dharma Meeting at the Youning Temple in Wushi Xiang.

Early in the next morning, we headed straightly to the Wufeng Mountain on the northwest of the county town for the Flowers Festival on June 6. Singers from Huzhu County and the nearby counties gathered on the long mountain ridge. Tu, Hui, Han and Tibetan people were here to listen to Hua'er (folk songs).

The Flowers Festival would last for 4-5 days. And the parting scene was so moving! Everyone lingered till the last day and had tears in the eyes.

The Descendants of the Tuyuhun People

The origin of the Tu people can be dated back to the Tang Dynasty or earlier. Some scholars believe that the ancient Tu people were the Mongolians stationed at the Great Xing'an Mountain. Later, they moved southward with the army of Genghis Khan, and finally scattered in the Huangshui River region. With the subversion of the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongolians retreated northward. But these Mongolians stayed and mixed with the Tibetans and Han people, forming a new nationality.

Some other scholars thought the Tu people were the offsprings of the Tuyuhun people. The ancestors of the Tuyuhun people migrated from Liaoning, finally arrived in Qinghai, and had founded a state for 300 years. When Tubo destroyed the Tuyuhun state during Tang Gaozong's reign, a small number of Tuyuhun people moved to Ningxia along with the royal families, but most of them stayed on the native land. Except those assimilated by Tubo, most of the Tuyuhun people staying in Qinghai lived on the south side of the Daban Mountain. On the other hand, some scholars believe that when the Mongolians entered Qinghai during the Yuan Dynasty, they married the offspring of the local Huo'er people and some Tibetans, eventually forming a new nationality called Tu people.



Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

Xining—A Border Town of the Tang Dynasty

We headed to Xining from Huzhu, and came to the second provincial capital after about 900 km from Xi'an. The urban area of Xining was narrow. The famous Huangshui River ran through the north of the urban area from the west to the east.

Xining was situated at the centre of the Huangshui River basin, the widest section the river plain. Today, this open and fertile river plain is filled with dense high-rises. In the early Tang Dynasty more than 1,300 years ago, this was a small border city with a perimeter of less than six miles. It was just situated below the Tulou Mountain where the Beishan Temple located today. This city was Shancheng County of the Great Tang Empire, a county that was closest to the border of Tubo. After the Anshi Rebellion broke out, the Li's regime transferred all troops stationed in Qinghai to North China to fight the rebel forces.

From then on, the whole Hehuang and Longxi regions were occupied by Tubo.

We visited the Tar Temple and Daqing Temple in Huangzhong County, and the next station was Xining on the west. The altitude rose step by step to above 4,000 m, all the way to the area where it is 1,500 km away from Lhasa. For first-time visitors of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau like us, this would be a discomforting prospect.

1. Some murals in the hall of Qutan Temple
2. Qutan is a Tibetan Buddhist Temple built in Ming Dynasty.
3. Tu people live in the southern Qilian Mountain range.
4. A Tu lady
5. Tu women dressed up in vibrant colour.
6. The annual Flowers Festival held on Wufeng Mountain draws Tu, Hui, Han and Tibetan people from the surrounding regions.





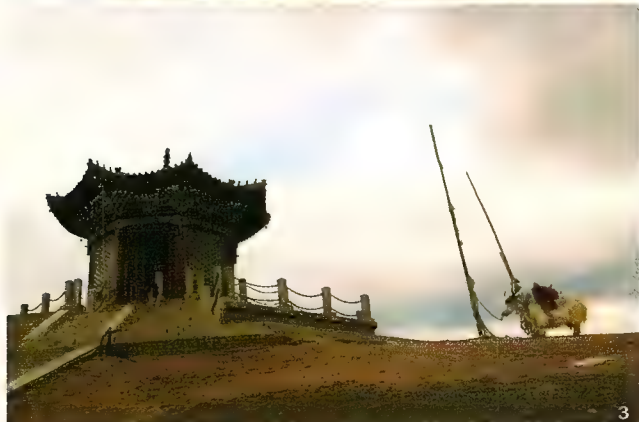
Through the Native land of Tuguhun Kingdom

Direction of the Ancient Way:

Shancheng (present Xining) — Linqiang (present Huangyuan) — Chiling (present Sun-Moon Mountain) — Weichi River — Qinghai Lake — Yanchi (present Chaka) — Tuguhun City (present Dulan)

Back Flow River — Moli Post (neighbouring present Qiaqia) — Dafei Plain (present Qiejie Prairie) — Nalu Post (present Shilei Shoal northeast to Grand Dam) — Warm Spring (present Warm Spring Village)





the west, flocks of white sheep and black cattle crept towards the horizon on the rolling grassland. At the remotest place, white clouds embraced South Qinghai Mountain. I could imagine that Princess Wencheng's sorrow when she cast her first glimpse at the western world. In the rest of her life, she would live on this desolate land, away from her native land and parents.

Precious Sun-Moon Mirror Changed

A folk story had it that Emperor Li Shimin had given Princess Wencheng a precious Sun-Moon Mirror before she took off. The magic mirror allowed her to see her parents, the palace and the downtown streets of Chang'an at any time she pleased. When Princess Wencheng reached Chiling Mountain, she saw nothing but grass and snow. Her tears became a backflow river running to Qinghai Lake. Suddenly, the poor princess thought of her precious mirror, but she found nothing but her anxious expression in it. Bearing such a great anger in mind, she threw the mirror at the mountain and headed west

In the morning, we left ancient Shancheng and passed by West Gate. On Qinghai-Tibet Highway, our journey continued with the ancient passage.

The East and West of Sun-Moon Mountain

Rape flower came into blossom on both banks of Huangshui River. Turning a hill, our car found the pass of Sun-Moon Mountain right ahead.

Going by the Sun Pavilion and Moon Pavilion, we saw a statue of Princess Wencheng in jade white.

Looking around at the hilltop behind Moon Pavilion, we found a spectacular view. In the east, golden rape flower and green wheat covered the valley and slope of Yaoshui Gorge. In

1. A folk tale had it that Princess Wencheng was given a precious Sun-Moon Mirror before she left Chang'an. (by Gao Minquan)
2. Prince Wencheng's statue stood in the middle of Daoliu Town.
3. The Pavilion on top of Sun-Moon Mountain

without a backward glance. From then on, Chiling was renamed the Sun-Moon Mountain.

The magic mirror was real; however, it was Ludongzan, the astute prime minister of Tubo, who played a trick. He worried that the precious mirror might intensify the homesickness of Princess Wencheng, and it would be troublesome when she cried for return. So the minister changed the precious mirror into a common bronze mirror stealthily.

It is a course of 26 km from the pass of Sun-Moon Mountain to Backflow Town. The small Back Flow River runs through its east side quietly, winds around on the prairie and finally flows into a small lake at the southeast corner of Qinghai Lake. However, it was called Weichi River in Tang Dynasty, for it was near the pasture of the Weichi Tribe of Serbi (a branch of Tuguhun). A post had been established there in Tang Dynasty.

We continued our journey to the west, crossing Xiangpi Mountain 3,800 m in altitude and reaching Chaka Salt Lake. Expelled by the Chinese of Western Han Dynasty, Qiang people had moved from central Huangshui to the place called Salt Pool then. A worker in the salt filed told me that the lake surface produced snow-white halite with genuine saline taste. The emperors and imperial concubines of Qing Dynasty even brushed their teeth with them. In the ancient times, the people of Qiang, Tuguhun and Tubo as well as the succeeding Tibetans and Mongolian traded halite for Chinese tea.



Driving westward for 130 km along Qinghai-Tibet Highway, we arrived at Dulan County, capital of former Tuguhun Kingdom. There exist many sites related to that kingdom around Dulan, such as Yingder Sacrificial Altar 15 km away in the east and Kexiaotu Sacrificial Altar 30 km away in the south. According to the presumption of archeologists, they might serve as royal altars for worshipping the heaven and the ancestor separately.

Later, we reached Niaosuhe Valley in the south of Reshui Village. A lot of Tuguhun tumulus had been found here in recent years. The unearthed relics are mostly silk and satin products made in Tang Dynasty, as well as vessels and coins used

by the ancient kingdoms of Western Regions and Western Asia. In the age of Tuguhun, the passage was incorporated with smooth traffic.

The Waterloo of Tang Kingdom

We left Dulan and returned to Back Flow River along the original route. Driving to southwest on Provincial Highway 214, I enjoyed the scenery with the northern slope of South Qinghai Mountain as a backdrop. It took a distance of 42 km to arrive at Qiapuqia Town, capital of Hainan Canton and also the locus of Gonghe County. On the street were many Tibetan and Hui people wearing white hat.

Princess Wencheng had taken a rest in the Moli Post when





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



she left Sun-Moon Mountain and went by way of Back Flow River. It was said that there were many craftsmen in the attendant team. They carved characters on stones and sculpted Buddha statues on the way. Some stone carvings had the name of Princess Wencheng, and the later generations built temples around these carvings.

According to the historical records, Princess Wencheng passed by Dafei Plain where Xue Rengui, a famous general of Tang Dynasty, had been defeated by the army of Tubo and was almost beheaded by the Tang emperor when he fled back to Chang'an.

The Tang emperor had intended to help Tuguhun recover the lost territory from Tubo. But the battle at Dafei accelerated the fall of the kingdom.

Princess's Bath at Warm Spring Post

We turned to the east and reached Heka Town in the evening. Under the gorgeous streetlight, we doubted if we were in a metropolis. Though it was late at night, all restaurants were filled with hungry passengers. Our car climbed up Heka Mountain the next day and we met the first hill with an altitude higher than 4,000m on Qinghai Plateau.

Crossing Heka Mountain, we reached Grand Dam Canyon, which had been a borderline between Tubo and Tuguhun at the early phase of Tang Dynasty. At the slope of Ela Pass, we saw an iron plate hanging from a long pole. On the plate were the

words: Ela Pass, 4,489 m in altitude. Driving 58 km from the former borderline, we arrived at Warm Spring Village.

There were hotels, restaurants, shops and Tibetan hospital on both sides of the highway. At the south end stood an accommodation named Hot Water; behind it was a hot spring. This was by far the more attractive lodging than the other hotels.

At the throat of the passage, Warm Spring Post was established in the period when Tang Dynasty and Tubo were in friendly terms. When Princess Jincheng passed by the post, she ordered the attendants to build a stone house beside the hot spring and indulged herself in spa without stop over the following ten days. The willful princess even asked her father to cede the land around the hot spring to Tubo for the convenience of her enjoyment. The emperor eventually granted her request and awarded Tubo the land generously. Yellow River became the borderline between Tang Dynasty and Tubo from then on.

Warm Spring Post must be an attractive place in the ancient times, for the hot spring could refresh travellers brought them warmth.

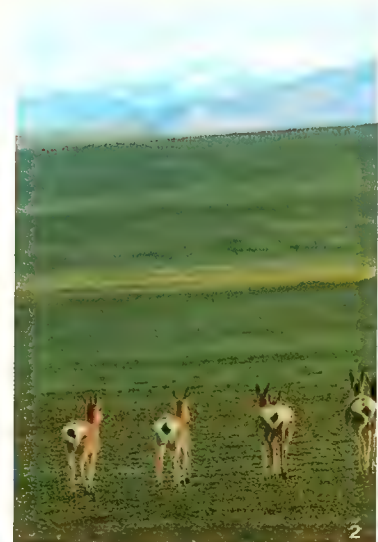
1. Inside the Tuguhun noble tombs found many silk and satin products made in Tang Dynasty.
2. Chaka Salt Lake is known for its salt production.
3. Women in Qinghai and Tibet are excellent herders.
4. Warm Spring Post was where Princess Wencheng indulged herself in spa without stop over ten days.
5. The pasture 10 km away from the ancient road

Jiangheyuan Passage

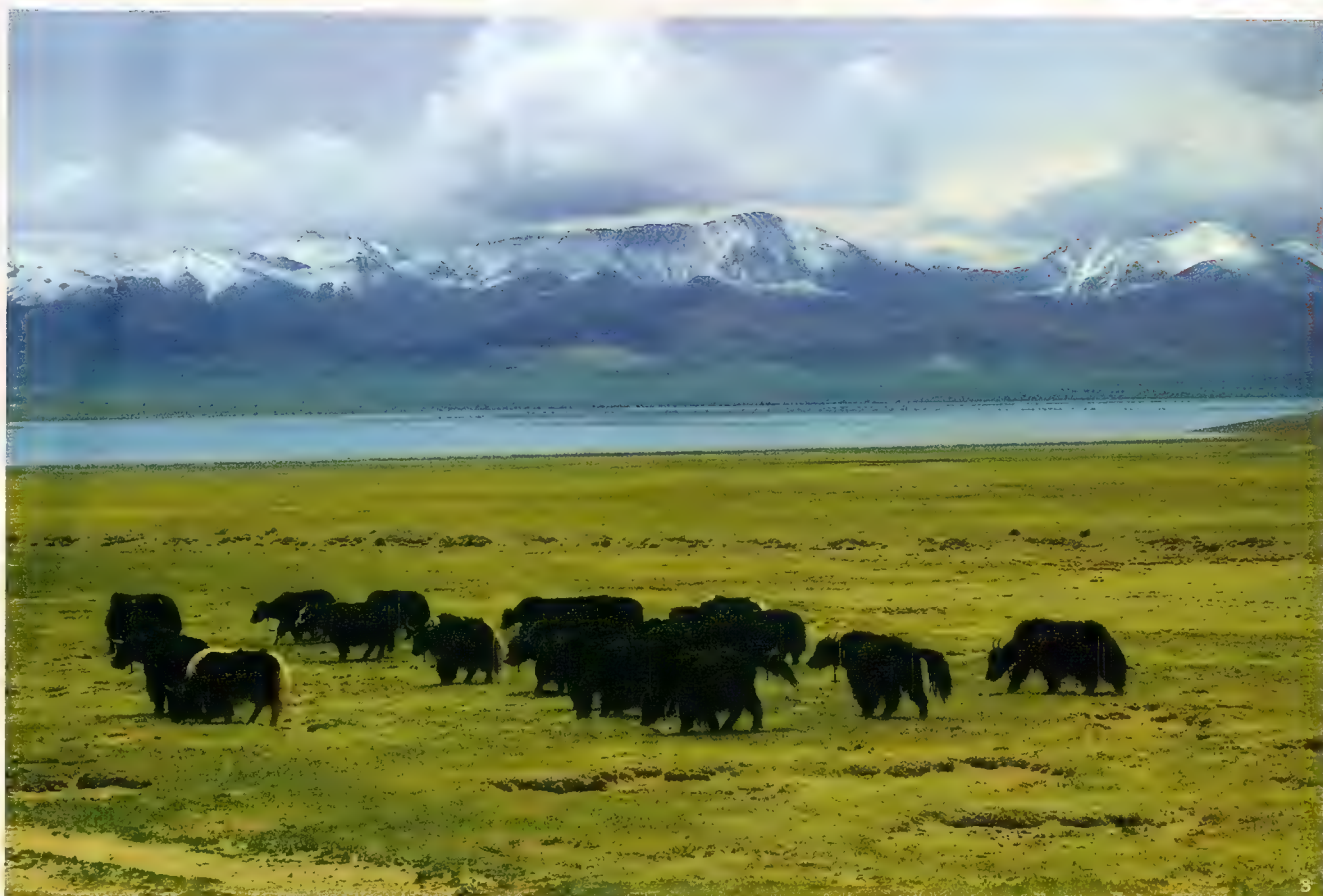
Crossing Rivers and Mountains

Direction of the Ancient Way:

Warm Spring Post (present Warm Spring Village) — Liemo Sea (present Kuhai Sea) — Huashixia Huangheyuan (present Yellow River Bridge) — Buffalo Groove — Bayankala Pass — Zhonglong Post (present Qingshuihe Village) — Yak River (present Tongtian River) — Duomi Kingdom (present Duo County) — Gaduo Ferry — An Chong — Lieyi Post (present Jielong) — Shitang Tubo Village (Niangjiecuo) Jiezhi Bridge (present Ziqu Bridge) — Jiezhi River (present Ziqu Valley)



1. The black eagle has a nice nickname "Jade Belt Eagle", for it has a white stripe on its tail. The Tibetans see it as a divine bird.
2. The vast land is full of wild animals. We even came across with some deers on our way.
3. Kuhai Lake (Bitter Sea) is a salt water lake.
4. Some Tibetans are leaving the Qingshuihe Village.



The altitude exceeds 4,200 m in Guoluo Canton. A crystalline water area ran into our eyes when we went around a ridge. This should be Liemo Sea, but its name was Kuhai Sea on the map. A post had been established nearby in Tang Dynasty. Kuhai Sea is about 30 km away from the hot spring.

We drove 12km to the southwest when we reached Zuimatan (Horse Drunk Beach). Some said that the grass there could make horses drunk. We asked the Tibetan roadmen, "Do horses get drunk eating the grass here?" A middle-aged man answered loudly, "This grass is very rare indeed. Horses will stagger along once they eat a bit." He mimicked a drunken horse by swaying his body, "They will fall asleep and even kiss the world goodbye if they eat more."

The altitude was near 4,300 m when we passed by Long Stone Pass. Later, we came to Maduo County. The gas attendant told us that the new county was two kilometres away. There were few people in the orderly new county. Evening afterglow dyed the sky red. Standing at the hilltop, we watched the sun went down the Yellow River. Tomorrow, we would go to Bohai where Songtsen Gambo met Princess Wencheng.

Kiangs and Dark Eagles

We left the county and drove to northwest at dawn. There were no trees, crops and signs of human habitation in our visual



field. Suddenly, a flock of dashing animals appeared in the distance. They turned out to be antelopes with white tail, and native herdsmen called them yellow goats.

"Look, Kiang! Kiang!" Our driver cried. About 200 m away in the south were five kiangs. They are taller and stronger than asses, somewhat like mules and with bistre stripes on the back. When snow covers the 4,000-m meadow in October, kiangs will cross Bayankala Mountain to look for foods in the southern slope. They will return to the northern slope after March or April. The male kiangs will start wooing in July or August. To win the heart of young females, they often fight against their rivals bravely.





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

to carry drugs! No one knows that whether the tale is truth or not, because many people find it hard to catch sight of the diminishing falcons.

Meeting Princess Wencheng in Bohai

There were no signs of human habitation by the Eling Lake. The book told me that the nearby Bohai Post House was established 1,300 years ago. This was the place where Songtsen Gambo, the chieftain of Tubo coming from Lhasa, met Princess Wencheng, the Tang Dynasty coming from Chang'an.

The New History of Tang Dynasty records: "Emperor Li Shimin betrothed Princess Wencheng to Songtsen Gambo in the fifteenth year of his reign. Daozong, king of Jiangxia was honoured to escort the princess and build houses in Heyuan. Songtsen Gambo led parties to receive her personally and behaved quite properly as the new son-in-law. The young chieftain was surprised by the beauty of Chinese attires."

However, we found no signs of post house around Bohai, only a remote lake, mountains, and grassland. Where exactly was this Bohai, their meeting place? There was no final conclusion, but some people believed that it is near the Eling Lake and Zhaling Lake at the source of Yellow River.

Leaving Eling Lake, we arrived at Yellow River Bridge made of cement, a total of 50 m in length. Under it, the river was shallow and clear.

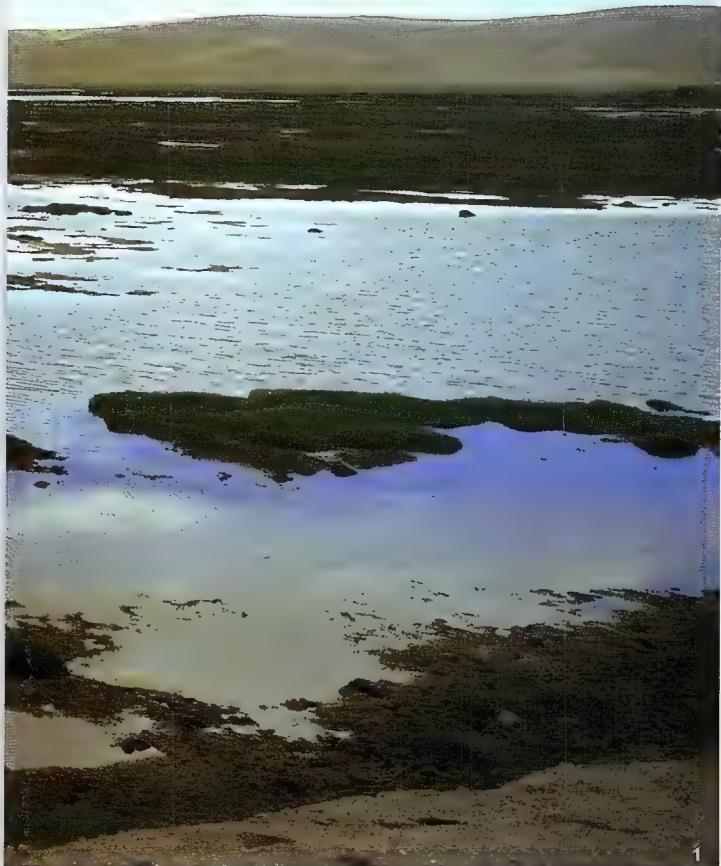
This place is named Huangheyan. Some experts believe that it had been a ferry. The grassland is dotted with various-sized lakes and marshes. At the upper reaches of Eling Lake and Zhaling Lake lies a basin meadow, 20 km in length and 13 km in width. Numerous rivulets run into the basin and form hundreds of lakes marshes. The clear water surfaces are like mirrors, and the basin is thus named Xingsuhai (Sea of Stars). The Tibetans call this place Yuegu Zonglie, meaning "boiler for frying highland barley". Guzong Liequ, headstream of Yellow River, comes from a small spring in the southwest of this "boiler".

Crossing Bayankala Mountain

Crossing Buffalo Trench, we arrived at the pass of Bayankala Mountain, 4,885 m in altitude. Bayankala Mountain is a southern branch of Kunlun Mountains. It connects Kekexili Mountains in the west with Min Mountains and Qionglai Mountains in the east. The mountain serves as a watershed between Yangtze River and Yellow River. The Tibetans deem it as an ancestral mountain. Its highest peak is 5,442 m in altitude but the average altitude is 5,000 m or so. For a climber, the greatest challenge lies in the high altitude more than the

1. The headstream of Yellow River

2. Bohai was where Songtsen Gambo met Princess Wencheng. (by Gao Minquan)



When our car just left the salt pool, a shadow skittered by our window and darted at the grassland all of a sudden. Then, we found a black eagle flew high in the sky, with a mouse in talons. Its spreading wings were about two metres in length. Driving along for the next five kilometres or so, we saw another eagle resting on a cement stake. The wasteland scattered many cement stakes, some were as tall as an adult, and some stakes even had aeries on top.

A herdsman told us that the black eagle has a nice nickname "Jade Belt Eagle", for it has a white stripe on its tail. The Tibetans deemed it as a divine bird. The cement stakes were made for them to build aeries and rest. The tough black eagle is a patient hunter that preys on mice, hares, snakes and even lamb.

People used to hunt eagle, fox and wolf under the name of "pest elimination" from time to time. After about forty years, almost all fierce animals and birds disappeared in the wilderness and the grassland became the paradise of mice and hares. The mice have holes that are connected underground. Both people and horses could easily injury themselves when trapped in those holes. In addition, mice and hares ate grass to the roots and caused the population of cattle and sheep decreased greatly over recent years. As a result, people here now forbid the hunting of eagle and wolf, and they also built cement stakes for the birds.

Alert, fast and stealth, the falcons are natural born hunters. In the past, the chieftains trained them to hunt preys. Nowadays, rumor has it that some criminals actually train them





overhangs, as the height can be fatal to the heart and lungs.

In most cases, an experienced driver will refuse the passengers' request for photograph. Instead, they will drive by at high speed because the high altitude will be dangerous to passengers who have poor health or suffer from cardiovascular diseases.

A Sudden Snow in June

The following regions were more desolated. There were no cattle, no sheep, no birds and no signs of human habitation on the way. According to the scholars' research, Zhonglong Post had been established by Qingshui River in Tang Dynasty. But the buildings were torn down for expansion at present. When Princess Wencheng entered Tibet, the ancient passage was

changed in some sections: Zhonglong Post — Zhaduo — Gaduo — Yak River (present Tongtian River) — Lie Post (present Jielong) — Jiezhi Bridge (east to present Ziqu Bridge).

However, we wanted to follow the journey of Princess Wencheng. So we had to reach Jiezhi Bridge via Jiegu and Ziqu Valley. It means a course longer than the above route by 150 km. But the original passage is smooth and open, suitable to an aristocrat like Princess Wencheng.

1. Hale and snow iced up our car's window.
2. The polluted Tongtian River (the upper reach of Yangtze River)
3. The children of Chengduo County
4. The huge sutra canister of nine metres
5. A Tibetan girl from Yeniugou in Han attire



1

Pollution in Tongtian River

We stayed in Chengduo County at night and went to Tongtian River, about 400 km away from the source of Kekexili River, in the morning. The polluted river was filled with dead twigs and rotten leaves due to mudslide. The source of the problem was soil erosion at Bayankala Mountains, where the vegetated area was in a disastrous state and most of the turfs were torn off.

However, Tongtian River has sufficient water flow, almost 100 times of the flow of the source of Yellow River. From Huangheyuan to Elinglake, Yellow River runs across the smooth high land like a creek, but the roaring Tongtian River rushes in the precipitous mountain ridges powerfully.

On the way of return, we saw a Buddha statue, more than 20 m in height, sitting before Gazang Temple and under the open sky. Samantabhadra and Manjushri stand on both sides,



2

about 10 m in height. In the regions inhabited by Tibetan Buddhists, I rarely found such Buddha statues sitting under the open sky.

This temple belongs to Gama Sect (Flower Sect). This sect has built many temples in Yushu before.

Two and a Half Billion Mani Stones

Crossing Xiewu, we arrived at the lower reaches of Tongtian



River. The Zhimenda Ferry established here in the ancient times is now replaced with a cement bridge. Crossing the river, we drove to Zhongda Temple at the upper reaches. There was an ancient ferry before the temple. Some scholars believe that Princess Wencheng might cross Tongtian River via Zhongda Ferry. But other experts have doubts after some site exploration. It seemed impossible for a large group with bulky baggage could cross the ferry built above quick water.

Driving 15 km to the south, we arrived at Xinzhai Village. A large temple was newly built for worshipping Jiana, the first-generation Living Buddha of Jiegu Temple. In niches of the hall stood more than 10,000 small Buddha statues. In the centre placed a huge sutra canister, about nine metres in height. Nine white towers stood in a row on the north of the main hall. Almost all disciples who come here would hold a Mani stone engraved with six-character incantation, or a blue stone engraved with thick lections. Some disciples would hold intaglio

carving Buddha statues. And they would leave their stones in the temples after worship.

With great curiosity, I entered the temple and found a huge pile of Mani stones of over three metres. Nobody knows how many pieces of stones there are, but some people guessed that they must exceed 2.5 billion. People have piled stones for more than 630 years since Ming Dynasty. All Tibetans from Yushu, Guoluo, Northwestern Sichuan and Northern Tibet would buy Mani stones from Xinzhai Village and pile them up reverently.

1. Mani stones of over three metres. Nobody knows how many pieces of stones there are, but some people guessed that they must exceed 2.5 billion.
2. A Mani stone is sold at about ¥1-¥5.
3. The lamas of Gazang Temple cleaning the Buddha statue
4. Gazang Temple belongs to Gama Sect (Flower Sect).



Shanyin Passage

Climbing Tanggula Mountains by Lancang River

Direction of the Ancient Way:

Jiegu Town (present capital of Yushu Canton) — Princess Wencheng Temple — Duolamakang — Ziqu Valley — Ziqu Bridge — Grand Canyon — Changla Mountain Pass — Dayue River (present Zhaqu) — Zaduo County — Aduo — Danrong — Moyun — Xinuoluo Post — Ningshui Bridge (present Dangqu) — Chawula Mountain Pass

The prosperity of Jiegu Town, capital of Yushu County, took us by surprise. Taxies and SUVs ran willfully on the streets. The local restaurants filled up the busy downtowns and quiet hotel streets. The streets were crowded with tourists coming from different provinces, Hong Kong and western countries.

The Blooming Commercial Port

Yushu might be the most well-off city on our passage from Xining to Lhasa. There were many Tibetan shops in the city, showing off all kinds of goods such as gorgeous silks, hats, shoes, robes, belts, and headwear. Their household appliances made of brass and copper, or plated with silver, also had a unique style.

The Buddhist ceremony shops had the appearance of an artwork museum. People could find many wonderful copper

Buddhist figures, niches, sutra canisters, beads, ghee lamps, Buddhist musical instruments, pots and jugs and the like.

The next morning, we went to walk around Jiegu Temple on North Hill. It was a little passed six when we reached the temple. Indeed, we were not lack of accompanies, and there were even elders of over seventy years old among us. Pulling the sutra canister and murmuring the six-character incantation, they walked around the white tower, the temple and the hill. It was part of their daily routine. If a man starts this pilgrimage at the age of 15, the walking distance accumulated in his lifetime will be equivalent to the circumference of the earth.

When we climbed to the hilltop, we could see that the new temple was built in the lower side of the mountain, an abandoned temple was stood in the southern side, and Jiegu Town was seated right at the foot of the hill. At this moment, we heard the singing of psalms coming from a splendid scripture



1. The area of Yushu
2. Yushu ethnic shops stock up with Tibetan fabric
3. A big pot of sour milk costs only ¥15
4. One can find all sorts of Buddhist odds and ends in Yushu ethnic shops.
5. Buddhist ornaments
6. Buddhist prayer beads

hall, which was both heartrending and inspiring.

Controversy over the Princess Temple

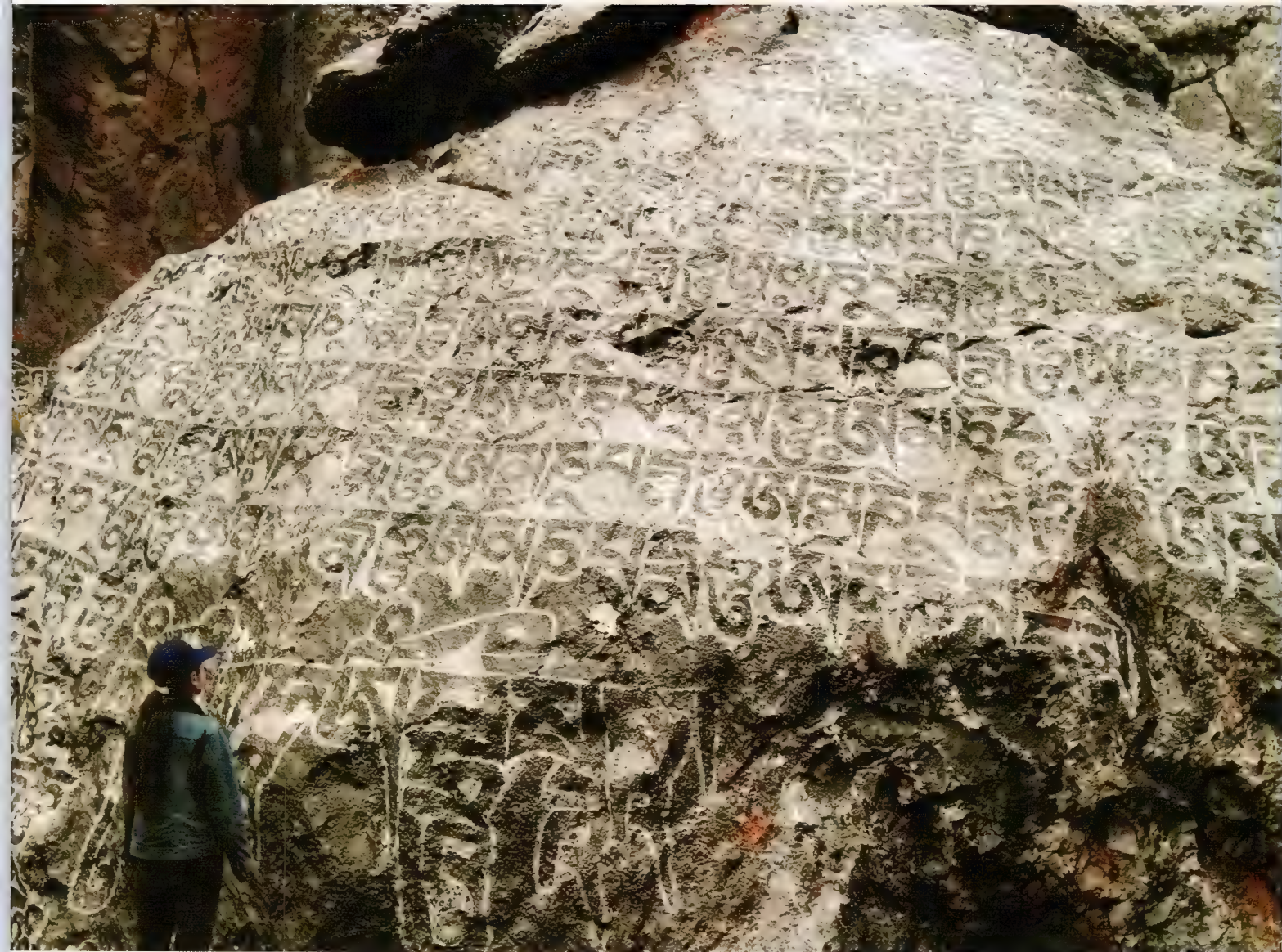
At noon, we went to Princess Wencheng Temple seated 20 km away. Two young Lamas sat on the stone steps at the gate and the temple was locked. These warm-hearted Lamas sent for an abbot for us. About sixty years old, the abbot said that the hall was made up of half building and half cave. I asked him, "Is there the statue of Princess Wencheng inside?" "No," he answered. "Then why do people call it the Princess Wencheng Temple?" "That is a popular name. Its official name is Great Buddha Hall."

According to the folktales, Princess Wencheng ordered local craftsmen to carve the statues of the Buddha and the eight Bodhisattvas on both sides and the stone inscription. Later, Princess Jincheng had a new hall built to protect the outdoor statue from wearing away.

The abbot led us to the front hall. On a black stone at the right side engraved the epigraph of Songtsen Gambo.

Princess Wencheng Engraved on Cliff Faces

According to the book *Original Experiences* written by Tang Huisheng, there was no statue of Princess Wencheng in the temple. Moreover, the Buddha statue was built in 762, which was 121 years earlier than Princess Wencheng's visit to Beina Groove. As a result, he concluded that the princess had nothing to do with the construction of the statue. But how could the later generations relate Princess Wencheng to the Buddha statue and the temple? Indeed, the statue was built to celebrate the birth of Prince Chisong Dezan, son of Chide Zuzan and Princess Jincheng. Princess Wencheng had merely lived in Beina Groove for two months. It was evident that the two events were confused and connected together as the time





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

went by.

Yet, we did find the image of Princess Wencheng in Chiba Groove, about eight kilometres away from Beina Groove. The stone carvings consisted of five images of Songtsen Gambo Worshipping Buddha. At the rightmost side, a bare-chest Buddha sat on the lotus seat. At his foot knelt a boy carrying a censer. In the middle, a man, wearing a gown and a tower-style hat of Tubo, bowed before Buddha, with a bowl in hands. Behind the man stood an ancient Chinese lady with a lotus. At the leftmost, a boy held a lotus, wearing the tradition attire of Tubo. According to the archaeologists, the man should be Songtsen Gambo and the lady Princess Wencheng. And the picture scroll should be made in the reigns of Songtsen Gambo and Chisong Dezan.

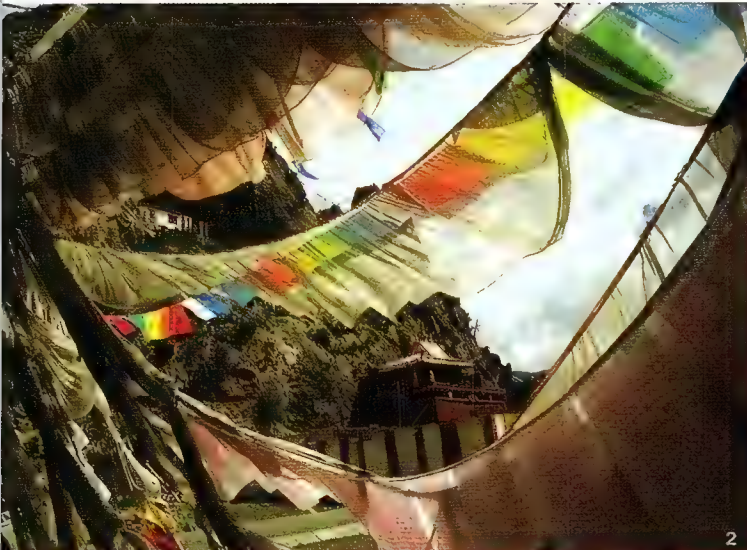
We drove to the south and arrived at Duolamakang. It was a junction of three roads leading to Nangqian County about one hundred kilometres away in the south. There were beautiful

scenes and many temples in the county. But since our interest lay in the ancient passage, we had to leave the place unexplored. We then went west to Zaduo County along the northern foot of Tanggula Mountains. The direction should be similar to the route of Princess Wencheng.

Parade Platform of Songtsen Gambo

Ziqu River is a large branch of Lancang River in the upper reaches. It was the throat to Tibet and was named Jiezhi River in

1. An enormous Mani stone
2. The mail hall of Princess Wencheng Temple is hidden in a cave.
3. The prayer hall of Jiegu Temple
4. Spinning the sutra wheel in front of Jiegu Temple





Tang Dynasty. Two huge stones lay in both banks of Ziqu River separately as recorded in *The Records of Tang Dynasty: Geography*. They might serve as the evidence for the existence of Jiezhi Bridge and post in ancient times. In the folktales, Songtsen Gambo shot two eagles with his crossbow here when he escorted Princess Wencheng. And the fallen stone arrows then became the parade platform.

Crossing the bridge, we reached Saputang Town where the headstream of Lancang River located. There was only one street in the county, one kilometre long from east to west. Zhaqu River, which was the major headstream of Lancang River, came from the southern foot of Tanggula Mountains in the west of Zhaqu County. The ancient Shanyin Passage should be parallel to Zhaqu Valley. Because it merely served as an auxiliary way, there were no detailed records of its direction and post distribution.

Digging Aweto

The way to Aduo Village was muddy. We met more than twenty Hui people who rode on a truck, with worn clothes and tired looks.

A young man told me that they were peasants of Huangzhong County and came for the aweto (an expensive herb). The truck took them here in the beginning of June. They would dig aweto at the upper reaches of Zhaqu and Dangqu.

The best aweto grows below snowline and above 4,500 m. Because the grass was thin, aweto pickers had to constantly crawl on the grassland searching and digging. People there usually gained more than 20 aweto at most, and sometime, they could only get less than five. The purchaser lived in the tent would buy the aweto from the workers once a day. One aweto was worth about ¥10.

Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



"But good times didn't last long. Recently, a gang of Tibetans came to rob aweto from us every three or five days. With the two-feet steel knives and small-bore rifles in hands, they hunted for aweto tent by tent. But they only took half of our gains. If you have 20 aweto, they would take 10. If you have eight, they would take four.

"They do not only target outsiders, but also the natives, including local herdsmen and Lamas."

Reaching the Headstream of Lancang River

We reached Aqu, a branch of Zhaqu Headstream. It flows rapidly, about seven or eight metres in width. The headstream lies in a large basin named Qunguo Zhaxi Shoal. In Tibetan, the name means "lucky headstream". Lancang River has a course of 4,600 km, flowing through six countries such as China, Burma,

Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Finally, it flows into the Strait of Malacca of Southern Pacific. It is renamed Mekong in the lands beyond China and is the parent river of almost all Southeast Asian countries. It is hard to imagine the thin stream will broaden to a thousand metres in the tropical rain forest area where it is 2,000 km away from Southeast Asia. If the local herdsmen have a chance to visit Vietnam and Thailand one day, they will never believe Mekong comes from the little creek before their tents.

Because there was a wetland on the way from Zaduo to Naqu, we had to return to Zining and reached Lhasa via Germu and Naqu. It was the last section of our exploitation.

1. The source of Lancang River in Zaduo County
2. Workers digging precious herbs at an altitude of 4,000 m
3. A massive rock by the Ziqu River
4. Ziqu is one of the sources of Lancang River.

Qiangtang Passage

Crossing Nyainqntanglha Mountains

Direction of the Ancient Way:

Dasushui Bridge (present Suoqu) — Humang Post (south to Chawula Mountain Pass) — Yema Post (around Baixiong) — Gechuan Post (around Naqu) — Habulan Post (present Sangxiong) — Tuluji Post (around Sunqu Bridge) — Tangluoyeyi Mountains (Nyainqntanglha Mountains) — Nongge Post (north to Yangbajing) — Luoxie (present Lhasa)



Departing from Xining, we arrived at Germu by train and then went to Naqu by bus along Qinghai-Tibet Highway.

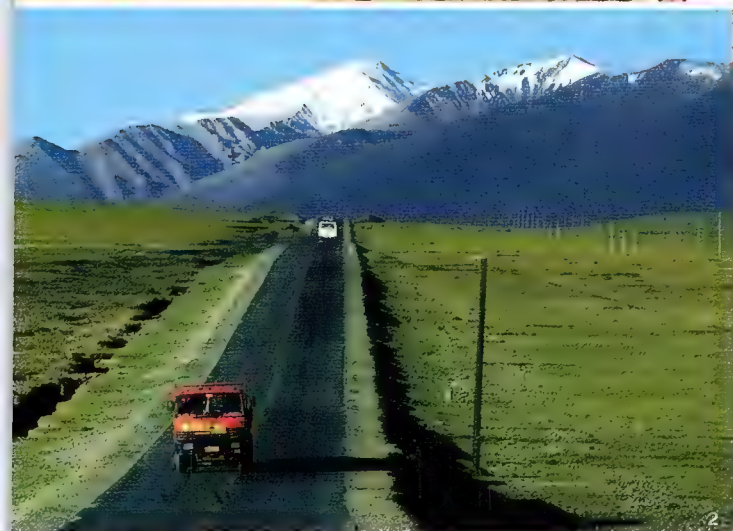
Climbing Kunlun Mountains

The avenue was originally opened and the post was established on the way in Yuan Dynasty, including Kunlun Mountain Pass, Baidu River (present Tuotuo River), Dangla Mountain Ridge (present Tanggula Mountain Pass), Anduo, Heihe River (present Naqu), etc. Qinghai-Tibet Highway is smooth for vehicles at present. The roadbed has been completed

for the whole line of Qinghai-Tibet Railway parallel to the highway. The traffic will be open in next year.

At Kunlun Mountain Pass, the altitude exceeds 4,700 m. Similar to Bayankala Mountain, Kunlun Mountains also bears solid plateau.

We arrived at the headstreams of Yangtze River after climbing Kunlung Mountains. As a headstream, Chumaer River takes its source at Kekexili Mountain. We reached Five Ridges at dusk and lodged at a small hotel. Sleeping at an altitude as high as 4,700 m, we had been disturbed with nightmares continuously.



Crossing Tuotuo River

All hills were covered with snow the next morning. Tuotuo River, another headstream of Yangtze River, is 80 km away from Fenghuo Mountain Pass. Looking down from the bridge, the iron-red headstream consisted of many watercourses. Driving another 40 km, we arrived at Tongtian Bridge. In Chengduo, Tongtian River is wide and has a rapid flow. But it

was only a shallow creek under our nose, a mere ten metres in width.

We continued our journey along Buqu Valley. At Tanggula Depot, the altitude exceeded 5,000 m. I felt dizzy and became forgetful. Driving another 20 km, we arrived at Tanggula Mountain Pass where there was a good viewpoint. Some people were brave enough to take pictures before the stone tablet and some curled up on their seats. It was the highest point of the whole Qinghai-Tibet Highway, 5,200 m in altitude. A minute later, we started to go down the mountain. The car ran slowly due to lack of oxygen during combustion.

The altitude fell to 4,500 m in Anduo County. It was five o'clock when we came to Naqu.

Meeting the Envoys of Tang Dynasty in Naqu

We were surprised with the modernisation of the small county in Northern Tibet. There stood many new buildings on both sides of the street. Most of them were hotels and

1. Princess Wencheng and Songtsen Gambo travelled westward along the Lancang River and arrived at Gechuan Post, where Tubo ministers used to meet important envoys of Tang Kingdom.
2. Qinghai-Tibet Highway, from Naqu to Lhasa





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road

restaurants.

Gechuan Post was established here in Tang Dynasty. When the important envoys of Tang Dynasty came to the post, the Tubo ministers were here to meet them.

We hired a taxi driver Jinmei the next day. He was 25 years old and his name meant "fearless" in Tibetan. He would take us to Lhasa.

Heihe River was the major headstream of Nujiang River. The Tibetans called it Naqu. With flat topography and rich soil, Heihe Valley would be the best pasture of Northern Tibet Plateau. Some black tents appeared every three to five kilometres, and there were white sheep and black yak grazing around them.

We arrived at Dangquka Town at 10 o'clock in the morning. It was the most thriving town next to Naqu in the southern section of Qinghai-Tibet Highway. There hid great commercial opportunities along the long street and everything has advanced in pace with the times.

Dangqu was located at the upper reaches of Lhasa River and took its source at the snow-covering hills of Nyainqntanglha Mountains. To the northwest of Dangquka Town, an earth road leads to Damucuo, the lake with the highest altitude in the world.

We drove southwest when leaving Dangquka Town. The direction was parallel to Dangqu and Nyainqntanglha Mountains. The scenery in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau was hypnotising; perhaps the young princesses were also intoxicated by it.

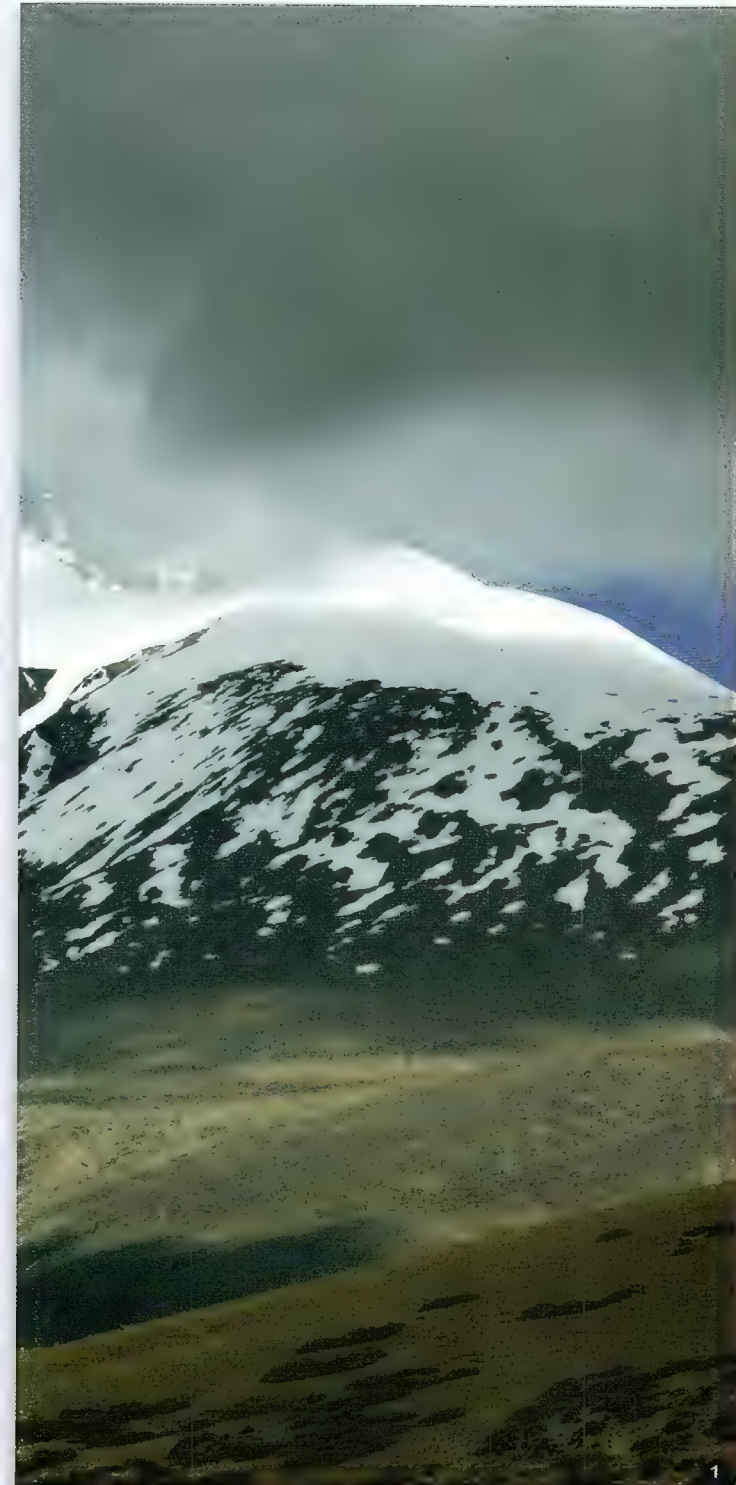
There were culverts at the bottom of roadbed every 500 m or so. These culverts looked like the doors of the ancient city. They were designed for seasonal move of the wild animals, such as kiangs, yak and antelopes.

We reached the highest peak of Nyainqntanglha Mountains at dusk. The driver got off the car and prayed before the mountains with palms together and head lowered. He said that the peak was one of the eight divine mountains of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. All Tibetans, regardless of pilgrims, travellers or drivers, would stop and pray for a while.

We arrived at Yangbajing at 8 o'clock in the evening. I suggested that we should go to visit the steaming hot well the next morning. The smiling driver told me that the terrestrial heat company had covered all the hot wells with houses. The eruption I seen in photo ten years ago had long become historical scenes.

Nongge Post was established to receive important envoys of Tang Dynasty. At present, Yangbajing is the junction of Qinghai-Tibet Highway and Sino-India Highway.

1. Nyainqntanglha Mountain is one of the eight holy mountains in Tibet
2. The white towers by the highway near Dangxiong
3. Pilgrims on their way to Lhasa
4. Female lamas from Changdu had been on the road for two months. Their destination was Lhasa.



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Shannan Passage

Luoxie (Lhasa):
Capital of Tubo Kingdom



We went to Dazhao Temple in Lhasa the next morning. The plaza was crowded with people. Some people knelt down and bowed flat on the ground covered with blue stones. Other people walked around inside the temple first. Then, they would walk around Balang Street, Dazhao Temple, Potala Palace and the whole urban area successively. They turned the sutra wheels clockwise when walking clockwise; walking in a reverse direction would bring disasters. A pilgrim to Lhasa was the greatest dream of all Tibetans.

I walked around Dazhao Temple first and then entered the temple through a side door. The admission ticket was ¥70 for visitors and free for Tibetan disciples. The golden statues of Sakyamuni accompanied with Princess Wencheng were placed in the centre of the hall. On both sides of Wencheng sat the golden statues of her husband Songtsen Gambo and Princess Chizun. The disciples with solemn expression moved forward step by step to worship the holy statues.

There was a picture scroll on the western wall of the hall. The Buddha of twelve years old took a four-wheel carriage on the ancient passage while Princess Wencheng rode behind. In the lower corner of the painting, it had the image of Dazhao Temple being built 1,350 years ago.

Back then, Songtsen Gambo determined to build a large

temple above the lake when Princess Chizun of Nepal and Princess Wencheng came to Tibet. In the fifteenth century, Zongkaba, the founder of Yellow Sect, preached the power of Buddha in this place. From then on, it was renamed Dazhao Temple. The temple had a worshipful position in the minds of Tibetan Buddhists. They believed that Lhasa was the centre of the world, Dazhao Temple was the core of the universe and the hall worshipping the Buddha of twelve years old was the main focus of the temple.

Different Characters of the Two Princesses

According to Red History of Tibet, the holy Buddha statue was worshipped in Xiaozhao Temple with the architectural style of Tang Dynasty at the very beginning. Princess Chizun of Nepal also brought an eight-year Buddha statue when she married to Songtsen Gambo. This statue was worshipped in

1. Barkhor Street at night
2. The Buddha is decorated with various pearls, agate, jades and gems.
3. The devoted believers
4. The mural about Princess Wencheng's journey





Tracing the Tang-Tubo Ancient Road



Dazhao Temple. When Songtsen Gambo passed away, the Tang Kingdom and Tubo became enemies. Fearing that the Tang people would dispatch troops to take back the Buddha statue, the monks of Xiaozhao Temple buried it under the ground. Later, the two countries reconciled and Princess Jincheng was married to the chieftain of Tubo. She suggested that the 12-year Buddha should be moved to Dazhao Temple and the eight-year Buddha should be moved to Xiaozhao Temple; they have remained in the same place since then.

Princess Jincheng was a person of political talents. She intervened in external affairs as the queen of Tubo and princess of Tang Dynasty many times, and played an important role in shaping the boundary at Heyuan and at Chiling.

In opposition, Princess Wencheng's contribution mainly lay in promoting skills, such as farming, spinning and construction. According to The Records of Tibetan Kings, Princess Wencheng was an outstanding intellectual in construction, astronomy and geology. Her dowries, aside from jewelry, were sutras and books about history, medicine, mathematics, etc. In addition, there were seeds of various vegetables and crops. She needed to hire more than one hundred horses and camels to carry her materials. Her attendants included artists and craftsmen of all sorts. These were important materials that contributed to the social development of Tubo. For example, the princess had ordered the craftsmen to install watermill at quick waters. The Tubo people were pleasantly surprised to learn such effortless way to ground highland barleys into rice flours. Soon, the technique of water mill became popular in Tibet.

Princess Wencheng also taught local women the techniques of weaving and embroidery. She and her craftsmen played a valuable role in putting forward many techniques.

When Princess Chizun and Princess Wencheng arrived at Tibet in succession, Songtsen Gambo determined to build two temples for them separately. Princess Wencheng revealed her talents in the process of design and construction. When Dazhao Temple and Xiaozhao Temple were completed in

648, the two statues of Sakyamuni were moved there officially. At the same time, Songtsen Gambo had Potala Palace and an abode of magic king built on Hongshan Mountain. The palace consisted of 999 rooms.

Luoxie was desolate when the princess first arrived. It had only a palace named Senkang Gabu and some houses, and there was not even a proper place to place the statue of Sakyamuni. But the place transformed itself as the affluent capital of Tubo within ten years after Princess Wencheng arrived at Tibet.

Every detail proved that the architectural tradition of central plains did produce great influence on the nomadic Tubo. Princess Wencheng and her craftsmen changed the architectures in Tubo.

Therefore, Princess Wencheng was worshipped by all Tibetans even after Songtsen Gambo passed away in 650. When she passed away in 680, local people held a solemn funeral for her and put her in the same tomb of Songtsen Gambo. At that time, the flame of war was burning between Tang Dynasty and Tubo, and therefore, the funeral of queens was never mentioned in the historical records of Tibet. But detailed records were made on the death and funeral of the two princesses by people in the Tang Kingdom. They both did enjoy a special position in the history of Tibet.

Monument of Tang Dynasty and Tubo

The famous Meeting Monument of Tang Dynasty and Tubo was surrounded by stone walls at the gate of Dazhao Temple. On the top were stone carvings of twined dragons. It was said

- 1 & 2. Princess Wencheng promoted skills such as farming, spinning and construction in Tibet.
3. The tradition way of farming taught by Princess Wencheng is still in used today.
4. The stone tablet that records the coalition of Tang and Tubo.
5. The statue of Princess Wencheng in Potala Palace



that the joint covenant for normal relationship between Tang Dynasty and Tubo was recorded with Chinese and Tibetan on both sides of the monument in 823.

However, the covenant was signed when both kingdoms were extremely weak. Twenty-three years later, Tubo was divided into hundreds of smaller kingdoms. The empire of Tang Dynasty fell into pieces within fifty years after the perdition of Tubo.

Though the two kingdoms came to perdition in succession, they did lay a solid foundation for the harmony and unification of multiple nationalities of China. Over the following 250 years, the two kingdoms had intermediated their diplomatic relations by means of marriage, alignment, market trading, etc. Frequent exchanged led to assimilation of cultural forms.

Building Potala Palace

A tricycle took me to Potala Palace via two or three crossings. Many Tibetans knelt on the sidewalk beside Beijing Road and kowtowed towards the palace. Everything appeared pure and divine in this place.

Potala Palace was originally built by Songtsen Gambo for marrying Princess Wencheng. The later generations expanded

the construction continuously and became the station of Dalai Lamas. When the fifth-generation Dalai Lama passed away, a golden tower was built to store his body. Then, such entombment replaced the former celestial and water burial. Their remains would be protected with salt against dehydration and then covered with antiseptics. They were then placed in the tower when dried completely. The 14-m golden tower of the fifth-generation Dalai Lama was enveloped with various pearls, agate, jades and gems.

Qujie Zhupu was the earliest building of Potala Palace. It meant "the abode of magic king" in Chinese. In the centre worshipped the statues of Songtsen Gambo, Princess Chizun, Princess Wencheng and Ludongzan.

On the wall of Dasongge Corridor was the mural paintings related to the ancient passage, diagrammatic view of Chang'an, Songtsen Gambo's proposal, the journey of Princess Wencheng and ceremonies in Lhasa. On the east wall of Cuomu Qinxia painted the journey of Princess Jincheng.

1. Yarlungzangbu River runs through Yalong Valley, the birthplace of Tubo. The first Tibetan palace, Yongbulakang, stands on top of the hill.

2. The mausoleum of Tibetan kings in Qiongjie



Pibo (Qiongjie): Origin of Tubo and Home of Tibetan king

I hired a taxi to the southern mountain area -- historical and cultural origin of Tubo, where Songtsen Gambo's grandfather first established Tubo Dynasty in Qiongjie and Naidong. Therefore, Songtsen Gambo stayed here with his two wives for many days in the past.

Yongbulakang, Palace of the First Tibetan king

The car arrived at Lhasa River about 10 km later. Qushui County was 40 km away in the southwest, and we reached Zedang at sunset.

We drove southeast on the new pavement along Yalong River. Highland barley and horse bean flower danced on both sides.

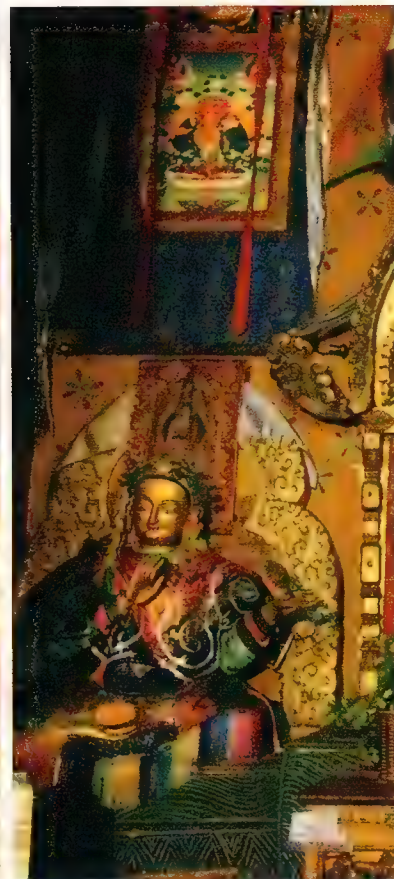
The driver Zhaxi said that southern mountain area has a special status in Tibet, for this is where the first-generation

Tibetan workers established their business in Yalong Valley. The macaque, ancestor of Tibetan, lived on Gongbula Mountains behind Zedang.

There are three peaks on Gongbula Mountains: Yanggawuzi, Senmu Wuzi and Zhukangzi. The king of macaques lived in a cave of Senmuwuzi, the Princess of Devils lived in a cave of Yanggawuzi and Bodhisattva Samantabhadra cultivated himself in Zhukangzi. Under the direction of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, the king married the princess and their children became ancestors of Tibetans. Since the dam nearby was once their playground, people called this place Zedang ("playing dam" in Tibetan).

Driving by a village, we saw an ancient palace sitting on a hill. It was named Yongbulakang, which was the palace of Zanpu Niechi (grandfather of Songtsen Gambo). On the first





floor worshipped the golden statues of more than ten Tibetan kings. The second floor was used to worship Buddha, and the third floor was reserved as a bedroom when Dalai Lama came here to meditate.

Folktale of Princess Jincheng

At the hill foot, the driver was talking to an old Tibetan. He was Dajie, 78 years old, and lived in Pozhang five kilometres away. Pozhang, meaning "palace" in Tibetan, was the place where the 37th king Chede Zudan had built a palace for Princess Jincheng. At the very beginning, Princess Jincheng was engaged to the handsome son of Chede Zudan. But he passed away in an accident when she arrived at Tibet, and the princess was then married to the middle-aged king following the customs of Tibet. King Chide Zudan had written to the emperor of Tang Dynasty, explaining the accident and expressing the good will towards the princess and her homeland.

Therefore, Chide Zudan had a palace named Pozhang built beside the original palace from then on. Two years later, Princess Jincheng gave birth to a baby named Chisong Dezan.

Original Capital of Tubo

On the way of return, the driver parked the car beside Changzhu Temple. The temple was old and mysterious. In

Tibetan, "Chang" means eagle and "Zhu" means dragon, and the name itself implies a colourful mystic tale. It was said that there was a dragon hidden inside the adjacent lake. And Songtsen Gambo turned himself into an eagle and subdued the dragon after six stormy fights. Then, he had the lake filled and Changzhu Temple built. This place was later became his winter retreat.

In the back hall, I saw the Pear Thangka. The picture of the resting Avalokitesvara, two metres in height, was outlined with more than 20,000 pearls. An old embroidery Buddha image was worshipped on one side. The driver told me that Princess Wencheng had made some of the embroidery work. At the abode of magic king worshipped the coloured statues of Songtsen Gambo and his two wives.

Crossing Yalong Bridge and turning south, we went to Pibo (present Qiongjie), original capital of Tubo.

Qiongjie was 30 km away from Zedang. It was a small and clean county. There was only one street, nearly half a kilometre in length. The county was built along the steep cliff. On the slope far away stood the broken walls of a stone castle. It was the site of Six Tiled Palaces built by the Tibetan kings of the ninth generation to the fifteenth generation. The scale was almost a hundred times of Yongbulaji.

Langri Lunzan, father of Songtsen Gambo, led the army of Yalong Tribe to defeat Supi Tribe, who had ruled the reaches of Lhasa River and Chuhe River. Then he founded Tubo Dynasty



and established the capital in Pibo (present Qiongjie). In 629, Langri Lunzan was poisoned by his treacherous ministers and Songtsen Gambo took over the throne when he was only 13 years old. Supported by able ministers, he suppressed the rebellion of the former army and nobles of Supi and Yalong tribes. In 633, he moved the capital to Jixuewotang, or Luoxie (present Lhasa). Tubo continued to expand its territory to the north and east in the following years. Finally, Songtsen Gambo opened the way to China and India by means of marriage.

However, the warm and moist Yalong Valley had been deemed as holy land by Tibetan king for generations. Songtsen Gambo often enjoyed the leisure with his two wives here.

Rest Place of Tibetan Kings

Yalong Valley not only served as the birthplace of Tubo Dynasty but also was the tomb of Tibetan kings. The cemetery was located in the south of Qiongjie County and at the foot of Piruo Mountain. It took us five minutes to get to the mausoleum area. Thirteen mausoleums of various sizes arrayed from the slope to the bank of Yalong River. The mausoleum of Songtsen Gambo was seated by the river, and there was a temple built on it.

The temple was named Zhongmu Zanolakang, meaning "the temple of Songtsen". The front hall was used to worship Buddha. In the back hall worshipped Songtsen Gambo and his two wives. On both sides stood the resourceful and virtuous



ministers Ludongzan and Tunmi Sangbuzha.

I climbed to the highest mausoleum along the bypath. From there, Yalong Valley and the horizon seemed endless.

When Princess Wencheng passed away, she was buried alongside her husband. Fate pushed this imperial girl to the remote Tubo from Chang'an. Served as queen for less than ten years and remained as widow for 30 years, she finally rested by the Yalong River. Princess Jincheng, her junior, took a rest in an independent mausoleum nearby.

1. The thangka of the resting Avalokitesvara, two metres in height, was outlined with more than 20,000 pearls.
2. The statue of the virtuous minister Ludongzan
3. The colourful statues of Songtsen Gambo and his two wives.
4. The Tomb of Songtsen Gambo and Princess Wencheng

Travel Tips!

..... A Tour to Tang Dynasty-Tubo Passage



The ancient passage extends over 2,000 km, passing through gorges, plains, rivers and plateaus. Be aware of severe climate on this attractive landscape. Summer is the best period (July—August) for travel. Three travel modes are recommended:

- 1. Exploration tour:** following the same route in the article. You will have a chance to learn about all the features of the whole ancient passage. The journey is tough and demanding; make sure you set aside enough time and prepare for unexpected expense.
- 2. Condensed tour:** visiting the main sections, such as the central Shanxi plain, Tianshui, Linxia, Xining, Yushu and Lhasa.
- 3. Highlight tour:** choosing your favourites only, such as Naqu—Lhasa, Xining—Yushu, Xi'an—Tianshui and Linxia—Xining. Best for people who have smaller travel budget.

Traffic

1. Long-distance traffic:

Hong Kong—Xi'an, Shenzhen—Xi'an,

Guangzhou—Xi'an, Xi'an—Lanzhou, Xi'an—Xining, Xi'an—Lhasa, Lhasa—Guangzhou and Lhasa—Chengdu.

2. Inter-zone traffic:

Train: There are more than ten trains from Xi'an to Baoji, Tianshui, Lanzhou, and Xining every day. Just a note: the railway does not follow the exact ancient passage.

Bus: There are regular buses between towns and counties at present. It is convenient for backpackers. Most sections of the ancient passage are consistent with the current national highways and country roads. The three types of buses: short-distance bus between towns, regular long-distance bus and luxury long-distance bus. The ticket price is about ¥200 if you choose to take a luxury bus from Xining to Yushu (a journey of 800 km or so), departing in the morning and arriving at night.

Chartered car: It is the best travel mode, comfortable and flexible. You may charter a car in the whole course. From Xi'an to Yushu, you will pay

a daily rent of about ¥150 for common minibus, about ¥250 yuan for Santana, about ¥450 for Beijing Jeep and about ¥800 for Mitsubishi or Toyota SUV. Moreover, you have to undertake the food and accommodation expenses for the driver, gas and road toll. You may also rent a car by sections. For example, there are many scenic spots on the way from Xi'an to Baoji. You may rent a taxi and pay the driver by day (about ¥250 a day). In addition, you should undertake the expenses covering gas and foods and accommodation of the driver.

Accommodation

There are star hotels in such cities as Xi'an, Baoji, Tianshui, Xining and Lhasa. Among them, the price in Lhasa is most expensive. The price for a standard room of a two-star hotel is about ¥300 in Lhasa, ¥200 in the cities on the way from Xi'an to Xining and ¥150 in Baoji and Tianshui.

Recommended Hotels:

Xi'an Liberation Hotel: located at Xi'an Railway Station Plaza and near a long-distance coach station. The price of a standard room is ¥120 or higher. Tel: (86 29) 8742 8946

Tianshui Maijishan Hotel: located on the west side of Tianshui Railway Station Plaza. The price of a standard room is about ¥200. Tel: (86 938) 261 2207

Xining Tongtianhe Hotel: located at the northern crossing of North Street and served as the seat of Yushu Canton Government Office. The price of a standard room is ¥150 or higher.



Xining Hotel: The price of a standard room is about ¥200. Add: 348, Qiyi Road, Xining. Tel: (86 915) 614 4145

Yushu Canton Hotel: located at the west side of the grand plaza. The price of a standard room is ¥150 or higher.

Lhasa Jiri Hotel: a combined style of Tibet and Han. You may enjoy the Tibetan opera available. The price of a standard room is about ¥200. The price of common room is ¥30-50/bed. Add: 12, Beijjngdong Road. Tel: (86 891) 632 3462

What to Bring

- Prepare all-season clothes. Take winter clothing with you even it is July. On the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau with 4,000 m in altitude, the temperature is near to 0 °C in the morning and in the evening. It will snow sometimes during the day. Hat is a must.
- Sleeping sack is a must. The accommodating conditions can be poor in the rest houses and small hotels.
- Bring torch, walking stick (can block attacks from wild animals), sunglasses, water bottles, etc. Sunscreen and lip balm are also necessary due to the dry air and strong ultraviolet radiation on the plateau.
- Medicine for stomach flu and cold.
- Digital camera is the best choice for photograph for it is troublesome to taking a large amount of films.

Preventing Altitude Sickness

- Most people will suffer from headache, asthma, tachycardia and even nausea and disgorge when crossing Sun-Moon Mountain. Walk slowly, take the right amount of food and never drink at the sections exceeding 3,500 m in altitude.
- When staying in Xining, you should buy the following medicines and articles: analgesic, Hongjingtian (prevent altitude sickness) and breathing bag.
- You should keep yourself away from cold, for a slight cold may lead to serious and even fatal complication in an environment with thin air.

Food

- There are various hotels and rest houses in the counties on the way. The price of a standard room is about ¥100.
- There are many rest houses and small hotels in the towns. The price is ¥40-60/room or ¥10/bed.
- The food changes greatly on the way from Xi'an to Lhasa. There are all kinds of restaurants on the way from Xi'an to Xining. From Xining to Yushu, there are more mutton restaurants and Sichuan flavours as well as some genuine Tibetan foods, such as mutton, horse meat, Tibetan stuffed bun



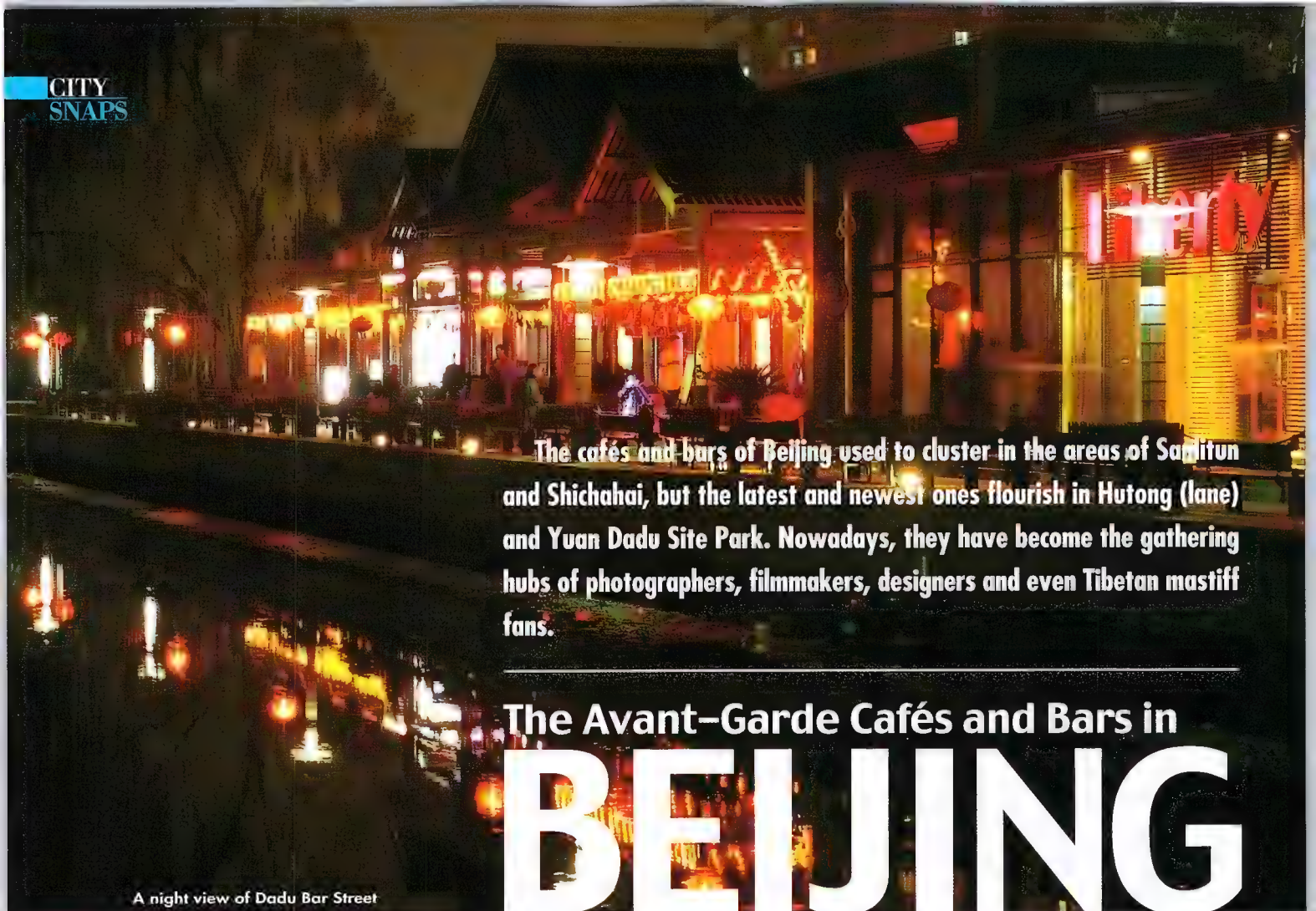
and milk tea. Most southerners will have a hard time adjusting to the local food.

- Because Tibetans are not used to having vegetable in their diet, you should eat more fruit and vegetable to prevent constipation.
- Food is most expensive in Lhasa and Naqu than in Xian.

Others

- Pay attention to the vehicle quality before hiring the taxi. If it breaks down in a desolate place, it will be troublesome and even dangerous.
- Fill up the gas tank whenever you see a service station, for you never know when you will see the next one.
- Be careful of mastiffs around the Tibetan tents.
- Learn the customs and taboo of Tibetans in advance and follow the regulations of the temples.

1. On the way to Tuguhun Tombs from Dulan County
2. The fast food restaurant in Dazhao Square
3. Yarlungzangbu River once gave birth to the Tubo Kingdom.
4. A girl from Qiongjie County



The cafés and bars of Beijing used to cluster in the areas of Sanlitun and Shichahai, but the latest and newest ones flourish in Hutong (lane) and Yuan Dadu Site Park. Nowadays, they have become the gathering hubs of photographers, filmmakers, designers and even Tibetan mastiff fans.

The Avant-Garde Cafés and Bars in BEIJING

A night view of Dadu Bar Street

MASTIFF BUDDY BAR World of Tibetan Mastiff Fans

Photos & Article by Li Youxiang

The whole Dadu bar street seems to just spout in the Yuan Dadu Site Park over night. Along the north river bank dotted with trees, there are over 20 small buildings in post-modern style. These buildings of various heights are linked together and known as the new favourite of Bobos (Bourgeois Bohemians).

Tibetan Art and Cartoons

The Mastiff Buddy Bar near the west end of the street is the new talk of the town. The Tibetan-theme lobby decorated with cartoons makes the room chic, cozy and fashionable. Its ancient Tibetan style furniture is renovated into a well-designed liquor cabinet, and the big horn hung on the wall gives a religious atmosphere. This place draws throngs of people with their Tibetan mastiffs during the weekends.

There was a lovely white Tibetan mastiff lying in the stainless steel cage near the bar counter when I visited. I wanted to pet it but dared not. This white dog looked quite big but he was only seven months old. He looked very obedient with his half-closed eyes when his master was close by. When he was taken out of the cage to play and to have his photos taken with customers, he was very friendly.

The Love for Tibetan Mastiff

Zhai, the owner of the Mastiff Buddy Bar, was a famous photographer. We had tea and talked about his Tibetan mastiff. Ten years ago, when he was building a house at Pinggu Mountain at the outskirts of Beijing, his friend gave him a small Tibetan mastiff to safeguard his house. He then got to know about this animal. Through successful caring and breeding after all those years, Zhai had several well-trained pure breed Tibetan mastiffs. One of them named "Iron on Gold" worth ¥150,000. During all these years, he had made many friends who were mastiff owners. Therefore he opened this bar to provide Tibetan mastiff fans a place for sharing.

The Loyal and Gentle Dog

Tibetan mastiffs are loyal to their masters. Once challenged, they would strike back and never quail. According to Lu, an old customer of the bar and a dog trainer, Tibetan mastiffs have the same nature as Akitas or Rottweilers. They are conscious of strangers but trust children and gentlemen. Compared with other kinds of dogs, Tibetan mastiff is more gentle, family-oriented and obedient. On the other hand, they have a fierce side too. A Tibetan mastiff tamed and kept by Lu once dragged a

Photos of Tibetan mastiff in the bar



Magazines about Tibetan mastiff



Tibetan mastiff fans exchanging thoughts and ideas

thief who had attempted to steal building material. His mastiff stood 1.8 m tall. Its big head, mouth, and impressive strength could seriously threaten any thief.

The Pride of Keeping a Mastiff

While I was chatting with Lu, the bar street outside was livened up. I picked up a magazine named Tibetan Mastiff Pictorial.

Modern people see keeping mastiff as a kind of cultural pride, and they wish for a more developed and regulated market for mastiff breeders. In order to find a better breed, many people are willing to travel to the distant Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. And as

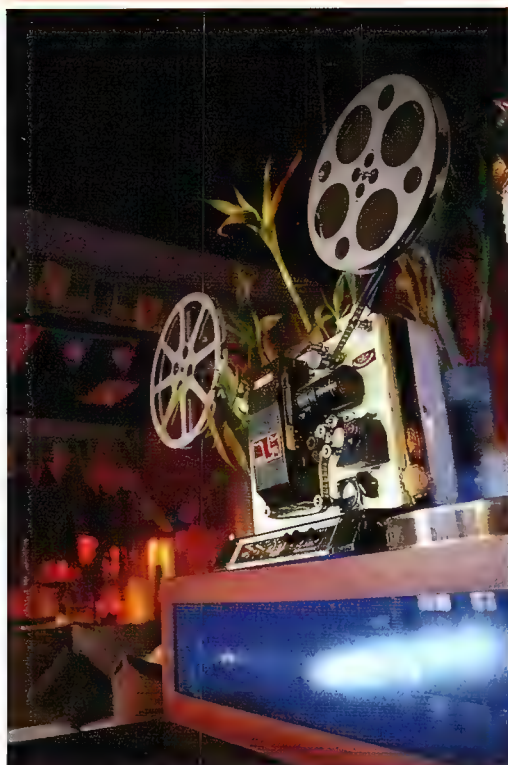
About Tibetan Mastiff

Mastiff is the most ancient dog in Tibet. Thousands of years ago, it settled down in Qinghai-Tibet plateau. It is intelligent, tamed and strong. It has a well-built body and is energetic and brave. A grown up mastiff is normally 70 cm wide at the shoulder and some even 80 cm. There are four main "families"—gold, yellow, white and black. It is said that those with triangular eyes are the most original and pure breed. However, quite a number of mastiffs look at people with slanting eyes. Almond shape eyes are very common too. The length of the dewlap indicates the smartness and beauty. On an interesting sidenote, mastiffs once fought alongside with Genghis Khan in European battlefields and their ferocious power helped won many wars.

the population of mastiff owner increases, mastiff gardens emerge all around China. Moreover, a special Tibetan Mastiff Associate of China has been established with Ma Junren being the chairman, the famous track and field coach for Majiajun team.

22 FILM CAFÉ Independent Dream Works of Film

Photos & Article by Yu Qiong



The antique projector on the bar counter



The impressive statue near the door of the café

A view of Xihai from the café



Houhai is famous as it is a busy bar street along the river located in the city centre. Xihai, which is next to Houhai, is a lot less notable but more natural and peaceful. My first visit to Xihai was to watch the debut of a documentary film shot by my friend. On a hot summer day, people crowded in the 22 Film Café to watch the film. Films made by independent film producers nationwide are shown here on every Saturday afternoon.

Strong Flavour of Film

The entrance of 22 Film Café is very innovative. It has a statue of a man running through the glass near the door. Inside the door, there is a statue of a woman who is shooting with her digital video camera. What makes 22 Film different among cafés in Beijing is its simplicity. Scarlet is its theme colour, which is a colour frequently appeared in the Spanish director Pedro Almodovar's films. It has a silver ridge of roof, and a pure black ceiling. There is a large French window facing Xihai. The café covers an area of nearly 200 m².

The scarlet walls here are decorated with black-and-white photos on the work and life of famous film directors. I marvelled at the antique projector placed on the bar counter, two lampshades hung under the ceiling, and the bookshelves at the corners full of film posters and books. The air was filled with the music theme from beloved films.

Pictures of celebrated directors on the walls



Opened during SARS Period

Several graduates from Beijing Film College opened this café. In 1999, when the Internet began to pick up pace in China, a group of fresh film graduates made a website called 22 Film.com. Soon they felt the need to have a place to show their films. During the SARS period in 2003, they all stopped working and spent all the efforts to establish the 22 Film Café.

A guy from Xinjiang called "wind" once posted a message in the chatting forum of 22 Film.com, announcing that he was about to finish a script. Nobody paid much attention to him, and he suddenly disappeared for half a year. One day, he came into the café with his film "Passer By" about the life on the Internet. This film was recognised as the first underground independent film in Xinjiang.

Add: East Side of Xihai, 103 Deshengmen Nei Street, Xicheng District Beijing Tel: (86 10) 8405 0094 Open Hours: 10:00-24:00

LEFT & RIGHT CAFÉ MIMA Fever

Located at the north side of the Winter Palace, Left & Right Café is a group of several courtyard houses with gray ceiling tiles and red windows enclosed in bamboo fences.

The snow in the courtyard had not melted when I arrived. The winter sun shone on the whole courtyard where a cat lay there and enjoyed sunbathing. Two sparrows were singing happily in the trees.

Simplicity is Beauty

The Winter Palace is a typical integration of royal landscape gardening and western architecture. Before using the name of Left & Right, Wang Hui, the designer, and Fei Bin, his business partner, named the cafe MIMA (Mix+Max). The word shows a compromising state between yes and no and also left and right.

Wang is one of the representatives of experimental architecture in China. Even though most bars adopt the dark

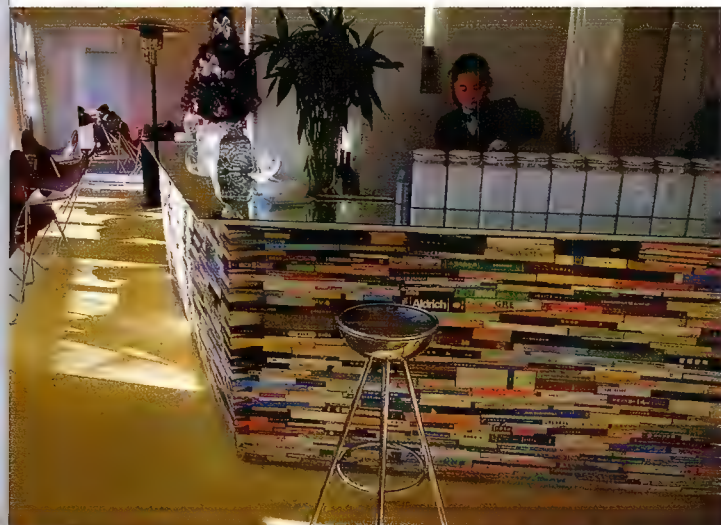
and luxurious style, Wang has a different idea. He believes that as long as there are good designing ideas, even the simplest and most economical material can make a natural and comfortable environment. Innovative design is necessary, but at the same time a designer should respect the building's original architecture. Having such scheme in mind, Wang and Fei decided to find a less crowded place and finally settled down in the 100-m² bungalow in this old courtyard house.

Thoughtful Design

There is a doorway connecting the three rooms inside the café. The walls are purely white and there are wooden beams above head. Mirror tables with triangular top, folding chairs made by brown genuine leather, red sofas and Japanese tea tables are used in the café. The most impressive design is the bar counter made with book blocks. They are a variety of language books. Beside the counter are some chrome plated-chairs with clock face.

This café has a cubic architecture with stainless steel mirror surfaces. Wang's original idea was to use mirrors as exterior walls, but he later rejected the plan because a mirror with uneven surface can distort reflection, creating an eccentric world between the real and imaginary components.

The toilets are decorated with stainless steel. The ceiling is the bottom of a fish tank made by transparent organic glass. Fish are swimming in the water above the head and light can shine through the water. In contrast, a floor is made of glass, and there is a grassland underneath. Yellowish interior walls are decorated by pieces of plywood to reinforce simplicity.



The bar counter is made of books.



The interior of the café



The owner's cat

The ceiling of the lavatory



COTTON CANDY CAFÉ

Dreamy Garden

This is a place amidst the jam-packed and busy city where you can indulge yourself in the rich taste of coffee, and find peace and leisure. Here you can listen to the melodious music, watch the fish swimming, hide from the sun under the gigantic Japanese pagoda tree, and gradually let yourself ease into the calm atmosphere.

The owner of this café is a girl called Ziyan who majored in music and enjoys designing. She had been dreaming about having her own design work until she opened the Cotton Candy Café. Her shop is full of neat ideas and surprises. For instance, she has a Cotton Candy Diary, which her customers can write anything down as if they are writing their own diary.

A DIY Café

This is a typical courtyard. The door displays all sorts of small pottery figures made by Ziyan two years ago. Every single detail is delicately chosen and set out by Ziyan. She is also fascinated by mosaic-tile patterns. One day she suddenly came up with the idea of using shells as decoration, and she rushed to the seashore at Beidaihe at four in the morning to pick shells. Those shells have now become the decorations on the washing

basins, fireplace and lampshades. Green plants are everywhere in the courtyard, and they are all planted by this elegant and quiet girl.

Endless Scenery

The two small lotus ponds in the courtyard of Cotton Candy Café are most impressive. The green lotus leaves, red lotus flowers and fish make one feel like being in a landscape garden in southern China.

Every house has a different style. The northern house features Mediterranean style with green as the theme colour; the southern house is a Chinese style study room in red; the eastern one is the café featuring red and green colours. On the red wall, there are paintings drawn by Ziyan's good friend.

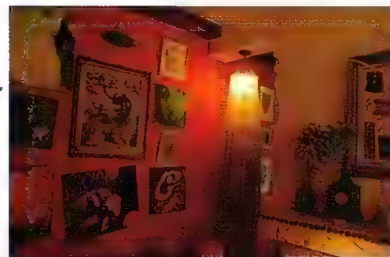
Climbing up to the roof of the eastern house, one can have a good view of the courtyard houses nearby. The 200-year-old Japanese pagoda tree serves as a natural umbrella in the summer. Listening to the singing of the cicadas and enjoying the cool breeze makes it a lovely Beijing experience.

Cotton Candy Café makes me recall my childhood memories, and Ziyan is the one who makes those memories come true.



The Cotton Candy Café deep inside the lane

The Cotton Candy Diary and a cup of Mocha



Oil painting on the red wall of the eastern house



Add: 35 Dong Mian Hua Lane, Dongcheng District, Beijing Tel: (86 10) 6405 5775 Open Hours: 11:00-24:00

HERE CAFÉ Hutong Impression

Chris is an American freelance playwright. He has been living in Beijing for six years and shares a place with a local in the hutong (a lane), so he speaks fluent Mandarin with a Beijing accent. There are many others foreigners like Chris. They love Beijing, love the hutongs and love the bars and cafés even more. One of Chris' favourites is Here Café, where he visits everyday. A laptop computer and a cup of dark coffee are what he needs for a whole day. If he forgets to bring money, he can put it on credit, since Chen Nong and Bo Bo, bosses of the café, are Chris' good friends.

Study Room Café

Here Café is deep inside Nanluo Guxiang Lane near the drum tower. Chen Nong is a photographer and considers himself a "new migrant" in hutong. He is also one of the bosses of There Bar, which is the first photography bar in Beijing. As he likes the hutongs, he lives and even runs a bar there.

Bo Bo, a university student, is Chen's business partner. He modifies Here Café as a campus café. Both foreign and local students like to come here. Foreign students come in groups to do their homework and mingle with the local people. Furthermore, many students from the opera university also love to discuss their new works and exchange ideas on film shooting

here. This is their regular hangout after school performance. Chen and Bo Bo often joke that Here Café should be called Study Room Café instead.

Hutong Photography

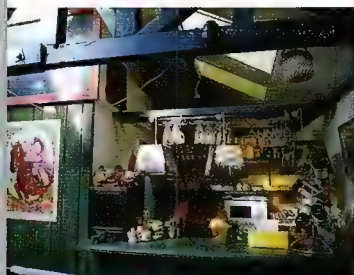
Chen decorates the café according to what he feels about hutongs. Black-and-white photos of hutongs are everywhere in the café. Photo exhibitions, mainly black-and-white images from Chen's friends, are held here occasionally. Such exhibitions make the café a success, since people enjoy coming here for a cup of coffee or simply looking at the photos.

The room is filled with decorations from the 20s and 30s. There is a working old-fashion radio and a Siemens typewriter made in the 30s. The crude and thick furniture fitted with red covers give people the feeling of home.

There Bar is very famous in Beijing. But it keeps moving, so the bar is always somewhere out "there". When Chen wanted to open another café, he called it "here" because he did not want to move anymore. Strangely enough, Here Café has stayed in Luogu Lane for two years.

When Here Café opened, there were only two bars in the lane. Now it has 20 bars and cafés. Chen worries that one day Nanluo Guxiang Lane will become a noisy and busy place like Sanlitun or Houhai. Therefore, his wish is to hold an art festival such as "Nanluo Guxiang Photograph Festival" to promote the old Beijing hutong culture.

The counter of the café



Photos of hutongs

Here Café hidden in old hutong

Lamp shade decorated by photos



Add: 97 Nanluo Guxiang, Dongcheng District, Beijing Tel: (86 10) 8401 4246 Open Hours: 10:00-24:00

Getting to the Root of Ginseng — **FUSONG**

Photos by Yuan Zhizhu, Li Chunfang Article by Yuan Zhizhu

Ginseng is a kind of expensive herbal medicine. It is called "Fairy Grass" and ranks first among the three treasures in Northeast China. However, wild Ginseng is continually disappearing. Nowadays, new growing methods are introduced in special gardens to ensure a stable production.

Fusong County, located in the western side of Changbai Mountain, Jilin Province, has a mild and cool climate with dense virgin forest and fertile soil. It has become a major growing centre of Changbai Mountain ginseng.



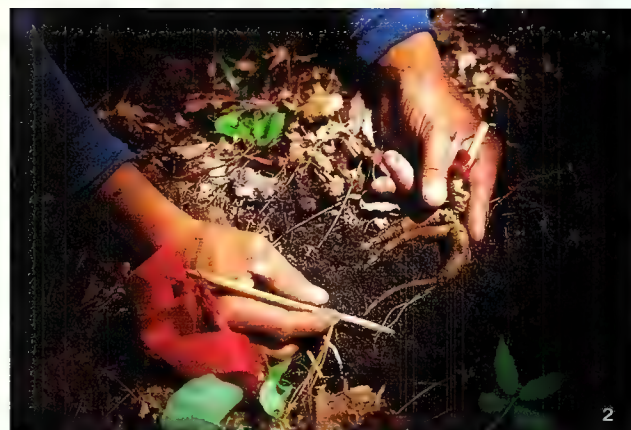
At the beginning of last year, I saw a 460-g Changbai Mountain hundred-year-old ginseng at the exhibition held in Jilin Hall of the People's Congress Hall. The plant was discovered in the virgin forest in Fusong in September 1981. The description said, "This is the rarest wild ginseng ever found in Changbai Mountain." It immediately drew my interest and I wanted to meet the person who found this ginseng.

Surrounded by mountains and water, Fusong is located at the border of Jilin Province. The water from the Songhua River source flows by this small town. Fusong was once the Bohai State in Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618 — 907), and its ginseng was one of the major imperial tributes of Bohai State. During A.D. 700 — 920, Bohai State sent a large amount of wild ginseng as tribute posts in nearly one hundred expeditions to the capital. In 1609, Jianzhou Nuzhen people sent 10,000 kg of ginseng to the imperial court and traded for plough, pot, salt, grain and oil as well as cloth. But the production turnover in Changbai Mountain Area started to drop after Qing Dynasty. Since the 1950s, Changbai Mountain has been under deforestation and its growing environment of wild ginseng has deteriorated.

New Soil Every Three Years

I was told that Wang Zhongquan was the person who found the ginseng. He lived in Beigang, which was about 60 km from Fusong. The next morning, I got to his home but he was not in. His neighbours told me that he had left a while ago to work on the ginseng garden in Ma'an Mountain. I immediately rented a van and asked his neighbour to help me find him.

It was May in late spring. Pink

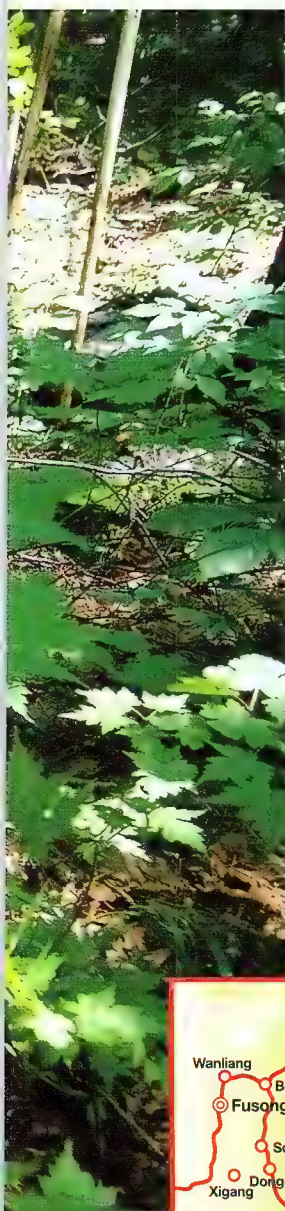


flowers covered most of the mountain. Occasionally I saw some sheds on the side of mountains covered by blue plastic layers. My guide told me that they were the ginseng gardens.

In 1736, in order to meet the demand of the imperial court, Fusong local government allowed people to turn over a large area of soil to grow ginseng. During the Tongzhi reign, ginseng gardens took shape in the forests and on mountain slopes in Fusong. About 300 households were involved in the ginseng business.

Wang, aged 73, was not able to climb over the mountains to pick wild ginseng anymore. Seeing him living alone, his friend Zhang Renzhu hired him to guard his garden of over 5,000 ginseng. This way, Wang could also sell the rhizome gastrodiae, chuang dilong and wild vegetable he picked nearby.

The ginseng field was on an even slope among the forests. Worker employed by Zhang the



- 1) When ginseng is found, it must be tied with red string according to tradition.
- 2) To "invite" ginseng, one must carefully remove the soil with an "easy stick".
- 3) Wang Zhongquan, aged 73, found the biggest wild ginseng in Changbai Mountain in 20 years.

previous autumn dug and overturned the original soil on the ridge of the fields. Many three-year-old ginseng would be transplanted here in April.

Ginseng needs five to six years to grow. The soil must be replaced every three years because the soil of secondary forest is not rich enough for continuous growing of ginseng.

Wang was busy laying plastic sheets on the sheds in the field. I tried to ask him the secret of locating wild ginseng, and he immediately became defensive and aloof, as I had expected. I then started to talk about the ginseng garden and he felt much more relaxed.

Precious Wild Ginseng Cheaply Sold

In order to protect the growing ginsengs from strong sunlight and heavy rains in summer, the sheds above the ridges of the fields must be set up properly. In late November, these shadings will be removed and the ridges will be covered with corn sticks bought from the countryside, otherwise the ginseng will be damaged by the cold weather and rot in the following



spring. For wild ginseng, they grow under the grass in the shade of trees and are covered by natural vegetation; such protection helps them to survive the extremely cold winter.

Before 1949, ginseng farmers used to cover the sheds with tree skin or grass, but they changed the covers with lincrusta in the next 20 years.

On the way back, my guide told me about how Wang had found the wild ginseng. Wang led two young men to spend about a week in the forest near Changbai Mountain in the autumn of 1981. Having no luck with wild ginseng searching, they were about to leave on the seventh day. Just then, Wang found some seeds of wild ginseng flowers among the pine trees. They spent over the next ten hours digging out the ginseng that was over six inches long with over one-foot long rootlets. It

weighed 460 g. They were very glad and thought they had made a fortune, but the state government was the only legitimate ginseng purchaser at that time, and it only offered them ¥1,000. The next year, the ginseng was resold for more than ¥100,000. The incident happened more than 20 years ago, but Wang still felt guilty for selling the ginseng in haste.

Taboos in Finding Ginseng

At the end of June, Wang Defu, teacher of the Fusong County Culture Association, told me that the ginseng was in blossom and it was time to search for it in the mountains. Yet, I could not spare any time. It was not until early August that I rushed to the ginseng gardens, but the blossoms had long gone. However, I was still surprised by the vivid red colour of the ginseng fruit on the ginseng plant. The next day, Wang managed to contact a group of people who were going up to the mountains.

Wang Houfu and his two fellows, Li and Xu, were packing up tools and getting ready for the trip. They all lived in a village in Fusong and were buddies since childhood. They began to explore the mountains with an old team leader when they were only 18. Over 30 years had gone by but they had never gotten apart. As Wang was older, Xu and Li took him as the team leader. It turned out that Wang was not quite willing to let me follow them because according to tradition, the number of people who go into the mountains must be odd.



Luckily, Professor Fang of Jilin Provincial Ginseng Research Institute ended up tagging along with us to do his research, and solved our dilemma.

The distance between Bali Mountain and Donggang Town is 11 km. This is where the ginseng fields located. We brought woven bags of tools, a large bottle of wine, as well as two plastic bags of twisted buns, bread, cucumber, green onion, and bean sauce. Apart from that, I found that everybody had a two metres long wooden stick in hand.

We turned along the mountain mouth and walked in the green forest along a cragged path. Wang asked Li to find another two "easy sticks", or "treasure hunting sticks", for Fang and me.

People in this profession are quite superstitious. They believe the word "easy" would give them luck and success, so they would call their tools "easy stick", "easy knife", "easy saw" and "easy string".

During the journey, we kept a walking distance of about four metres with each other. We were not allowed to talk, but

could use the "easy sticks" to communicate. I had to follow a set of signals such as "calling stick (leader knocking the tree three times to change direction)", "responding stick (companions knocking a nearby tree three times to respond)" and "touching stick". When encountering animals, either big or small, they would try to avoid them first. But if the animals were too fierce, the leader would knock the tree for seven times and whole team would stay close together. If they met another group, the two leaders would touch their "easy stick" and greet each other with the phrase "easy, easy".

- 1) "Omen" is a mark left by mountain explorers. It marks the number of people at the exploration and the number of the leaves of the ginseng.
- 2) In summer, after the ginseng abloom, farmer will either sell or pick the seed for planting in the following year.
- 3) Ridges in the fields of gardens are covered by plastic films from April to October each year to avoid direct sunlight.
- 4) When exploring the mountains for ginseng, a walking distance of four metres between the explorers is maintained throughout the trip. Their "treasure hunting stick" must be able to connect so that ginseng will not be missed out.





Leaving an "Omen" after the Exploration

Wang was quite confident about this journey because they found an old "omen", which was 70 to 80 years old, in the forest several days before.

An "omen" is a sign left by previous mountain explorer, which indicates where ginseng was once found. Thus, people believe that they will more likely have a gain if they search around the "omen". When someone finds a ginseng, he will cut



off a piece of tree skin as an "omen". Information, such as the number of the explorers and the size of the ginseng, will also be carved on the trunk of the tree. When they leave, they will throw the ginseng fruit near the "omen" to let it grow. After five years or so, wild ginseng can be found nearby.

We set up a big shed near the Wang's "omen",

where they were going to spend the night there. After a quick lunch, Wang led us to another forest.

Changbai Mountain in August is much cooler than the inland, but in windless days it is still quite warm in the mountains. Mosquitoes swarmed around us. I wrapped my head with a towel and kept smoking to prevent insect bites, but the back of my hand and my neck still had several bites. Just when I was silently cursing, Wang suddenly cried out "stick". Xu and Li, who were walking in front of me, shouted "got it, got it" and knelt down to the ground. Fang quickly dragged me to kneel down with him. I heard Li asking, "How many leaves?" Wang bent down and looked carefully, and told us there were five. Xu and Li made a sounding kowtow each and murmured "easy, easy" and got close to the ginseng.

Wild Ginseng Found

Wang and Li first tied the ginseng with the red "easy string". A bronze coin was tied to each end of the string, which was then tied to a tree wrapped with red cloth. I was at a loss, were they afraid that ginseng would "escape"? On the other side, Xu returned with a bundle of dried sticks and burned it. The mosquitoes dispersed immediately. Li took out his "easy knife"

to cut off the vegetation near the root of the ginseng and began to use an "easy stick" made by deer bone to remove the decayed soil slowly. A fresh ginseng gradually came into sight. When clearing the soil around the rootlets, Li was even more careful. He almost lay prone on the ground. If he broke a piece of the rootlet, Wang would be angry.

Fang measured the ginseng they "invited" out (it is a taboo to use the word "dig"). It is about 30 to 50 years old, 60 cm long, and weights about 40 — 45 g. We then looked at the shapes of the ginseng: the head and neck was long and round, its skin was tight and its grain tiny, the rootlets were long and it had the shape of a man. Fang told me that wild ginseng mainly grow in Changbai Mountain, Wanda Mountain and Xiao Xing'an Ling areas.

Changbai Mountain grows the most ginseng, and its harvests are of the highest nutritious and medicinal value. This is due to the unique geographical location, where the climate is mild. The deep and rich soil is also good for wild ginseng. In spite of the competition of American ginseng, Russian wild ginseng and Korean ginseng, Changbai Mountain wild ginseng still maintains its leading role.

When we walked back, I saw Wang rubbed off the skin of the ginseng and threw the white seeds near his newly cut "omen" — a tradition to sow seeds for others.

The Biggest Ginseng Market in Asia

We travelled northwards after leaving Fusong, and arrived at Wanliang half an hour later. This was the biggest ginseng trading market in Asia and it became busier as more fresh ginseng was available in the market. I had never seen so much fresh ginseng piling up like a small hill in an area, which was over 10,000 m². Buyers, sellers and visitors were all crowded in a tiny space.

Zhu Lixin, aged 45, was from a village called Hexi. His ginseng field was 10 km from Wanliang. He had quite a good harvest this year and decided to sell them at the Wanliang Market. At four in the morning, Zhu and his wife began to hire porters to carry a total of over 1,000 kg of fresh five-year-old ginseng. They put them in piles of 50 — 100 g and 150 — 200 g. The peak business hour is from 5 A.M. to 12 P.M. The porters, paid five yuan an hour, were too busy to eat the meat buns Zhu prepared for them.

Soon the market got crowded and noisy. Zhu told me that among those bargaining people, most of them were secondary traders. There were also groups of people who buy fresh ginseng to make dried one.

Zhu's younger brother was the most successful secondary trader nearby. He had his own personal network.

Among the 1,000 traders in the market, there were about 400 of them like Young Zhu. More and more young people who were under 45 engaged in this business. A start-up business needed an investment of about ¥50,000 to ¥100,000, and a

minimum return of ¥20,000 could be expected during the peak season from September to October. "It is even more 'easy' than growing ginseng," these young entrepreneurs said. However, such secondary traders were only active in autumn; ginseng businessmen, such as Leng Weichen, still mainly drove the market all year round.

Government Investment Needed

Three years ago, Leng purchased 11,000 m² of land in the ginseng garden in Xinglong Forestry Farm. Early in 1995, he came up with a process to steam red ginseng, and had gained huge success in Korea. But all foreign buyers who wanted to learn his trade secrets were rejected.

Over 35% of the Fusong people were engaged in the ginseng-growing business, and a third of them engaged in the processing and marketing side. Leng could not afford a secret leak in such a competitive industry.

Nevertheless, Korean businessmen would then further refine the ginsengs brought from Leng and sold them at the price ten times higher. Leng and those engaged in the ginseng business in Fusong felt bitter about this, yet they could do little because Fusong lacked the advanced technology to process ginsengs.

They wished the government would establish a more comprehensive system and introduce better technologies for ginseng farming soon.

The rare man-shape herbal species of ginseng has maintained the livelihood of people around Changbai Mountain for thousands of years. Fusong is not the same without ginseng. Since Wanliang is allocated as the area to build a hi-tech park for processing ginseng, and the Changbai Mountain Natural Reserve has strengthened investigation, research and protection on wild ginsengs, the dreams of ginseng farmers should not be far.

- 1) Wanliang Ginseng Trading Market is the biggest of its kind in Asia. The 10,000 m² of area can take 20,000 to 30,000 people.
- 2) Oddly-shaped ginseng weighs at 250 to 400 g can be sold at the market for ¥200 to ¥500 each.
- 3) The techniques at the red ginseng steaming workshops are very primitive.





Different from the splendid and delicate royal courts and solemn temples, the Danfu Temple, located at the foot of Yanfeng Mountain in Chaozhou, Guangdong, is a museum that integrates the essence of the three architectural styles of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It blends well into its surroundings, just like a water ink painting. It also seamlessly blends two elements of traditional Chinese culture, of indifference to fame and fortune, and the philosophy of cultivating one's morality. And these philosophies originated from a romantic enchantment with Chinese culture of an overseas Chinese.

On a drizzly spring morning, Yanfeng Mountain resembled floating ink glistening in the water. This provided the inspiration for an excellent Chinese painting. I walked through the dew in the meadow and into Danfu Temple shrouded in mist. It was a phenomenal experience — the scene I thought could only exist in a landscape painting actually came vividly to life at Danfu Temple.

Feng Shui Land, Feeling of Home

During my two weeks in Chaozhou it was cold, wet, and rainy. Danfu Temple in the mist and rain made me realise what Danfu really meant. Danfu refers to the philosophy of cultivating one's morality under Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It prompts a comparison to the temporal life that clamours for fame and seeks rewards through education and bureaucracy with its philosophy of indifference.

Danfu Temple is built into the side of Yanfeng Mountain.



As the day I visited was too foggy, a view into the distance was impossible. The white walls and black ceiling tiles gave the impression of a water ink painting. The misty phantasmagoric scenery burned itself deep into my memory. That is the philosophy behind Danfu. What is expressed in Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism is the distant beauty brought to life that can only be experienced in a relaxed and neutral state of mind. This kind of philosophy has shaped the ideology of the Chinese people.

It is told that Danfu Temple is a place of good Feng Shui. If Yanfeng Mountain is cut vertically in half, one can see that the colour of the two halves is different. Local people call it Yin and Yang soil. Vegetation on both sides is different too, due to

DANFU

DIVE

Photos by Huang Songhui
Article by Ma Haining



Every Huabiao is engraved with dragons and all kinds of human statues.

Danfu Temple in the mist has the artistic expression of Chinese water ink painting.

the difference in the soil. Behind Danfu Temple is the Yangfeng Mountain; in front of it is Xiahu Lake. Cradled amidst mountains and water, plus the magic of the Yin and Yang soil, this surely is the fabled place of good Feng Shui. In fact, the essence of Feng Shui is the interaction between the people and their environment. If one feels comfortable in his or her surroundings, it means good Feng Shui.

A Colourful Nation in Harmony

The story of Danfu Temple springs from the sentimental attachment of an overseas Chinese to his culture. The person who proposed to have Danfu Temple built, Guo Fengyuan, was neither a scholar nor an expert in cultural relics.



On the engraving of the Century Bao Ding is the fifth of the nine sons of the dragon, named Haotie. It is said that he loved eating, so his image usually appears on cooking and dining vessels.

TEMPLE

INTO WATER INK PAINTING

Close-ups of Exhibit at

DANFU TEMPLE

Once the commencement of construction work of Chaozhou Danfu Temple became known, every cultural organisation, at home and abroad, presented exhibits to lend their support. The Di Yi History Archive Museum presented 25 Jiaotai Royal Treasure Albums of the Qing Imperial Court. In 2002, the King of Thailand presented the Mahamengkong Buddhist Statue and held a grand reception ceremony. Also, in the Jiaotai Hall were 13 imitations of terracotta warriors and horses.

Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea

The Eight Immortals are: Tie Guai Li, Han Zhong Li, Lan Cai He, Zhang Guo Lao, He Xian Gu, Lu Dong Bin, Han Xiang Zi and Cao Guo Jiu. The legend of the Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea is very popular in the Chaozhou and Shantou area because of Han Xiang Zi. It is said that Han Xiang Zi was one of the descendants of the brother of Han Yu who was a famous litterateur during the Tang Dynasty. Han Yu was demoted and sent to Chaozhou. He contributed much to Chaozhou and was loved there very much. Han Xiang Zi was unbridled and did not like studying; he only loved drinking. He became a lecturer and is counted among the Eight Immortals.

He Xian Gu (One of the Eight Immortals)



He Xian Gu used to be a civilian but she became an Immortal after eating a magic peach given to her by an Immortal. She was able to predict fortune or misfortune and she could also fly. This is a series of life-size aquarelles of the Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea. A western painting technique was used to draw her figure, but the background was painted with Chinese techniques. The fusion of Chinese and western style is very interesting.

Chaozhou Golden Wood Carving



It is a wood carving but painted with gold paint. The upper part of the Chaozhou wood carving is three dimensional with multiple layers carved in great detail. The Fajie Yuanliu Tu in the Jiaotai Hall is 38 m long, with 632 religious statues and is the most famous collection in the Temple.

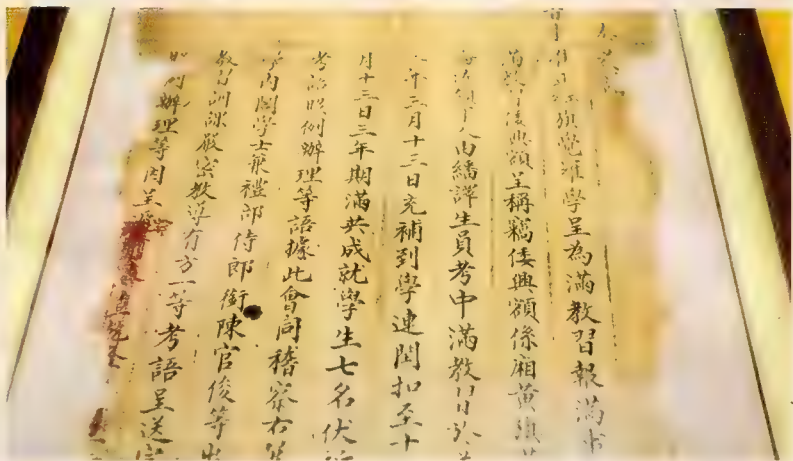
A row of Thai golden Buddhas in Jiaotai Hall. The Jiaotai Hall suggests not only an exchange between China and Thailand but also the Tai Gua in the Book of Changes, which indicates the fusion of Yin and Yang.



Auspicious animals are carved on the octa-well: Qi Lin, Jun Ni (a kind of lion), running horse, elk, tiger, elephant and lion.

Results of the Military Subject Examination

During the Qing Dynasty, talents were selected by participating in an eight-part essay test. Test levels were namely: child test, local test, regional test and imperial test, each level included literature and military tests. Students who passed all the local and regional tests were tested together in the capital city. The topic of the test was decided by the emperor. The three top winners were Zhuang Yuan, Bang Yan and Tanhua.



Changxin Palace Lantern (Imitation)



Changxin Palace Lantern is a maid of honour holding a lantern. Her head, arms, lantern shade and base are detachable. The right arm serves as a smoke stack. The lantern can also be filled with water to filter the smoke.

Changxin was the imperial name of the Han Dynasty. Ban Jieyu (heroine of "Changxin Qiu Ci") was disfavoured by the emperor. She was afraid of being framed by others so she worked as a maid to the queen mother.

Zi Qi Dong Lai (Good Omen)

Gong, his surname Aixinjueluo, was of Manchurian nationality, born in 1912, he specialised in the study of Chinese literature history and fine art history and was also a famous contemporary calligrapher and painter. His old style poems and Ci were famous at home and overseas. Therefore he was regarded as the triple-talent in poetry, calligraphy and painting. "Zi Qi Dong Lai" is a Taoist story, which tells how Lao Zi left the Hangu Guan and wrote the Dao De Jing.



Although Guo was of Chaoyang origin and born and brought up in Thailand, he never forgot about his roots in China. Guo worked hard for his accomplishments for most of his life. The Thai Emperor awarded him a piece of land to build a villa. He said that he owed his achievement to the virtue of the hard work of the Chinese people, so he cancelled his plan of building the villa for his own enjoyment, but instead proposed to have a Chinese Museum built in the hope of promoting Chinese culture and uniting overseas Chinese with their roots. In 1993, the construction of Danfu Temple (Bangkok) was completed. However, Mr. Guo's wish was to build a Museum in his hometown. In 1995, he personally returned to Chaoshan and selected the location and raised a fund of ¥120 million from Chinese people at home and abroad. The construction work of Chaozhou Danfu Temple began immediately.

Upon entering Danfu Temple, the first thing I saw was the four Huabiao (ornamental columns erected in front of palaces). Huabiao used to be a column on which people's sayings are carved; later it became an administrative symbol of the ruler.

After walking up the stairs, I arrived at the corridor of stone tablets. This design is thoughtful. Except for the passages of the main hall and the Jiaotai Hall, the corridor of stone tablets displays fine calligraphy works of various dynasties. These ancient works were arranged according to their historic place in time, ranging from inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty to modern calligraphy. The most famous one includes the Mao Gong Ding Posy, Taishan Stone Carving as well as lithographs of the Han Qie Notes and Sunny Time before Snow of Wang Xizhi. For someone like me, who is not very familiar with calligraphy, walking through these corridors was like completing a crash-course in calligraphy.

Standing in front of the main hall, I saw a corridor with black ceiling tiles and white walls, where I took stairs that are of the Hui Style architecture; their ornateness reminded me of the gentle poetry of the ancient residence in south Anhui Province on a sunset. But the architecture of the main hall was of Buddhist and Taoist design. It awakened in me a sense of peace and relaxation. As I entered the main hall, the most attractive statue for me was not



Upon entering the Jiaotai Hall, there is a mist due to the change in room temperature. It lends a religious atmosphere to the sunlight.

Savoring tea in the Breeze Pavilion and enjoying the distant view of Xiahu Lake.




Peach flowers in blossom, white walls and black ceiling tiles are the exact artistic conception of water ink painting.





Buddha's, which was in the middle, but the Apsara statue on the side.

Apsara, who is depicted playing the Pipa instrument, is a magnum opus of Dunhuang Art and has become the showpiece of Dunhuang. In a flash, my mind raced from Chaoshan to Huizhou and then to northwest China. Again I compared the solemn statue of Buddha and the charming Apsara; they are really from different styles that one may think that they should not be placed together. However, Chinese culture strives for harmony in variety while at the same time it encourages the flourishing of all schools of thought.

The graceful Danfu Temple's most precious attribute is that it bears witness to a vast country of 9.6 million km² and its 5,000-year history. Since the opening of Danfu Temple, many celebrities have visited, including business and entertainment celebrities as well as scholars. What brings these people from diverse backgrounds here is not the Feng Shui or the art itself, but a passion in the heart for China. 

Having a walk around Danfu Temple and returning to the Breeze Pavilion at the side of the lake, the warm mist again surrounded us. It felt so comfortable on my face like the most effective moisturising facial mask. It never stopped drizzling but we stayed out for quite a long time and did not want to stop watching the Gongfu tea change from weak to strong and then back again. Drinking of the tea, each single sip felt as if all the flavours were melting into my heart; just like the Chinese philosophy advocated by Danfu Temple, it appreciates a lighthearted approach to life, as if having the all encompassing quality of the sea embracing smaller rivers.

Travel Tips

Transportation: There are many coaches going from Luohu Coach Station in Shenzhen to Chaozhou. The journey is about 4 hours. Buses to Danfu Temple are available at Fengxi, Yingbin Hotel and Chaozhou Bridge in Chaozhou. Ticket price: ¥2.

Entrance Fee: ¥10

Lodging: White Yulan Hotel

Add: Chaozhou Blvd, Operations and Development Experimental Zone

Tel: (86 768) 286 3388

Chaozhou Yinbin Hotel

Add: Mid Section, Chaofeng Road

Tel: (86 768) 239 9888

Sites along the Way: Kaiyuan Temple, Chaozhou Ancient City, Hanwen Gong Temple, West Lake Park

Danfu Temple Website: www.danfuyuan.com

Dongbei Village

Powerhouse in Acrobatics

Photos & Article by Huang Yanhong

Dongbei Village is a typical farming village in Henan Province, but there is something unusual about it. Over half of the villagers among the population of 2,200 practice acrobatic feats, and more than 400 people from here perform across the nation on a regular basis. In fact, one of the two major acrobatic troupes in China comes from this little town.

Departing from Puyang, I arrived at Dongbei Village after travelling for less than half an hour along the Puyang-Taiqian Highway.

Award from Empress Cixi

Located on the former trail of the Yellow River, Dongbei Village used to suffer from serious salinisation and frequent natural disasters. During the end of the 14th century, this area had scarred by many wars and battles. Struggling to stay afloat, more and more villagers started to perform acrobatic stunts. As a result, the village has been engaging in the acrobatic business for the





past several hundred years since then, and the family troupes of Qiao, Li and Liu have been the most prestigious names.

From 1736 to 1796, the art of acrobatics flourished in Dongbei Village, where it gave birth to a total of 13 troupes. Qiao Zhiqing, who learned acrobatics from his father since he was a child, even made himself a celebrity from 1821 to 1851. He first showed his talents at the age of ten. At 18, he went to Wuqiao of Hebei Province to join the troupe of Sun Fuyou, which was known as the "No. 1 Troupe in the World". He started as a ticket officer but soon became one of the key performers. As he was outgoing and sociable, he later became a popular troupe leader. Soon, he fell in love with a performer named Zhang Suzhen. They got married and left the town. In 1895, they returned to Dongbei Village and established their own Qiao Family Troupe. The two acrobatic geniuses worked together and soon established their fame.

Appointed by the imperial court, their troupe of over 50 performers performed in over 20 countries, such as Japan, Korea, India and the Philippines for diplomatic purpose. Empress

Dowager Cixi received the troupe herself when they gave a performance in Beijing. She was pleased with the brilliant show and awarded them with two dragon lanterns and two imperial porcelain wares. It was considered a rare honour in Chinese acrobatics history.

I took up one of the imperial porcelain wares and took a good look. It had the characters of "Imperial Award" printed on the bottom of the pot. An old acrobat Qiao Zhengshui told me that the

Japanese armies burned down the village and all the imperial lanterns were destroyed during an invasion.

Dongbei Village had sent over 400 acrobatic talents to all over China in the past 50 years, many of which became outstanding performers. In 2001, Dongbei Village was named the "Origin of Chinese Acrobatics".

Acrobatic Tourism

When we entered the village, we met some farmers returning home after the farm work. There were over 500 households in the village, among which 350 of them had family members, at the age from three to 70, engaged in acrobatics. In recent years, Dongbei Village has become a spot for acrobatic tourism. Descendants and apprentices of the Qiao, Li and Liu family troupes are now open up their tour guide business in their own courtyards. Each troupe has its own selling point, and each member has his own specialty as well. A pro can just

1. Juggling at a farming courtyard
2. The teapot awarded by Empress Dowager Cixi
3. Head brick-breaking
4. Any farm tool can be used for performance





pick up a pot, bowl, scoop, basin, table, chair, hoe or anything imaginable and start a performance.

I was told that even three years old kid could perform. And when I saw a tractor parked on the road, I asked a kid about seven or eight years old if he could do a handstand on it. The kid jumped onto the engine without any hesitation and performed smartly.

What I saw later at Liu Jinwei's house was even more amazing. Liu started learning acrobatics at six and became a popular performer at 20. I saw his special "drilling" move. Liu half-squatted as he drew up a deep breath before poking his thumb firmly through a red brick. As I saw the flakes from the brick dropping onto the floor, I was totally dumb-found.

Seventy-year-old Qiao Yuanfu used to be a student of Qiao Zhiqing. He learnt acrobatics from his father when he was seven. As he became old and a bit ill, he could only performed several handstands on the chair. Chen Suqin, his apprentice, performed the juggling skills with feet for us. She first lay on the

ground and several young men put a 240 kg jar on top of her feet. Qiao Jinsheng crawled into the jar and a kid also jumped on it and did a handstand. Then Chen Suqin began to juggle the jar that weighted no less than 450 kg. Finally, Qiao pretended to jump off clumsily and aroused a big laughter from the audience.

The Qiao Jinsheng's family was up next and packed out the performance stage. Over ten kids were turning somersaults while some had farm tools, hoes, and tree branches, balanced on their head, nose, shoulder. Some were even juggling corns on bicycle. All these were so amazing.

The last and best programme took place on the playground of the acrobatic school. It was performed by the man "Hercules". Hercules Liu first asked several men to put a big millstone and several concrete plates on his belly. If it had not been raining, he would have one more floor plate (with eight kids

standing on top!) piled on his body. It was said that Liu could bear about a maximum of 2,500 kg.

The Struggling School

In the past decades, Dongbei Village had become the cradle of acrobatic arts. Today, successful performers are busy staging across the nation and abroad that they seldom visit their hometown. It seems that there will be a temporary shortage of performers in the village.

Liu Zhongwei grew up in Dongbei Village. He was trained at the acrobatic school when he was a child, then he left and established his own advertising company. Out of his love for acrobatics, he sold his company in 2001 and invested over ¥200,000 to build an acrobatic school at the southern end of the village.

The school occupied an area of 7,100 m². On the playground, there were facilities such as high gym bar, horizontal bar and parallel bars. There were a group of children practicing under the instruction of teachers in the 500-m² practice hall when I visited.

It was a boarding school that provided both acrobatic training and



cultural classes. The kids had to follow a strict schedule and get up at 5 A.M. and practice until 8 A.M. They would have cultural classes after lunch. After supper, there would be another practice, which would last until 9 P.M. The school had been sending acrobatic talents to other cities in the past two years. Acrobatic troupes from Guangzhou and Shenyang came to the school to recruit new members.

Students were required to pay ¥1,200 per year and ¥65 per month as living expenses. In 2003, there were a maximum of 80 students but then slowly dropped to 40. Paradoxically, the kids who wanted to learn acrobatics were from lower-class families, and they could not afford the high tuition fee; better-off families would not let their children to learn acrobatics. As a result, Liu needed to invest more than ¥10,000 in order to keep the school running every year.

Due to insufficient fund, the school could not hire well-qualified teachers and many of their plans died out. However, Liu was still very confident. "This year, our students have organised performance to raise fund for the school. As long as we do our best, the number of students would increase."



Puyang Acrobatics in Disneyland

Acrobatics is the most popular and beloved art in Puyang, and I watched an innovative acrobatic performance given by children there.

Only after I met Fu Jizhong, the director of the acrobatic art centre, did I know that these children just came back from the Disneyland in the USA after a replacement of two years.

In spring of 2001, this group of Chinese children with an average age of 11 arrived at Disneyland in Orlando, Florida, USA. Their performances were

very well received and they won the best performance award a few months later.

According to the contract, the children would give five performances every day in the Chinese Hall of the Future World in Disneyland. Each performance lasted 15 minutes and consisted of three programmes. In order to ensure the performance quality, the young performers were required to practice for four hours every day and attend two hours of cultural classes. They were provided with good living and studying environment.

Fu told me that a flag sewed with the words "Puyang, China" was shown in Disneyland. They wanted to tell it to the world where these lovely young performers came from.

1. "Hercules" is one of the most popular programmes.
2. Members of the troupe are strictly trained.
3. Many of the best Chinese acrobatic talents are from Dongbei Village.
4. This acrobatic troupe has been performing in the Disneyland for two years.

Travel Tips

Transport:

Buses going to Puyang depart from Zhengzhou South Bus Station. The journey is 216 km and there are over 20 buses a day. It costs from ¥36—¥46. Dongbei Village is about 40 km from Puyang County. There are buses and taxis going there.

Accommodation:

Hostle of the People's Government

Add: 176 Renqiu Road Tel: (86 393) 449 2360

Puyang Hotel

Add: 14 Jianshe Road Tel: (86 393) 441 5806

Yindu Hotel

Add: Mid Section, Renmin Road Central Tel: (86 393) 441 540

Jindu Hotspring Hotel

Add: Zhongyuan Road at Changzhuang Road Tel: (86 393) 449 3888

Shengli Hotel

Add: 32 Shengli Road Tel: (86 393) 488 1498

Tips:

There are acrobatic performances in the Green Fazenda at Puyang County. Ticket costs ¥10. There is daily performance by the Civil Arts Development Centre.

Contact: Director Fu Jizhong Tel: (86 393) 462 2022

In Dongbei Village, tourist can watch acrobatic stunts in the village, farming households or acrobatic school. Normally appointments should be made in advance.

Contact of the acrobatic school: Liu Ziguang Tel: (86 393) 885 1200

Marketing Section of Puyang Tourism Bureau Tel: (86 393) 442 9881

Scenic Spot:

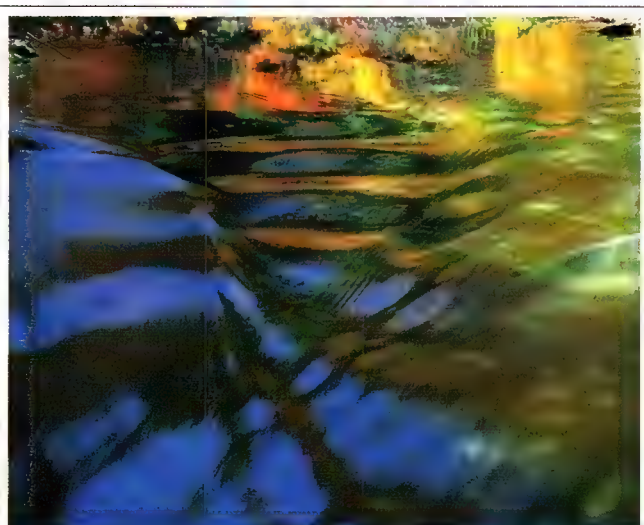
Puyang is a green city located on the former trail of the Yellow River. Besides acrobatics, there are other historical relics and tourist attractions including Qi City, Pushang Garden, Shijin Garden, Zilu Cemetery and Temple, Maolou Yellow River Tourism Area, No. 1 of Chinese Dragon, Dragon stone tablet and Zilu Tomb.



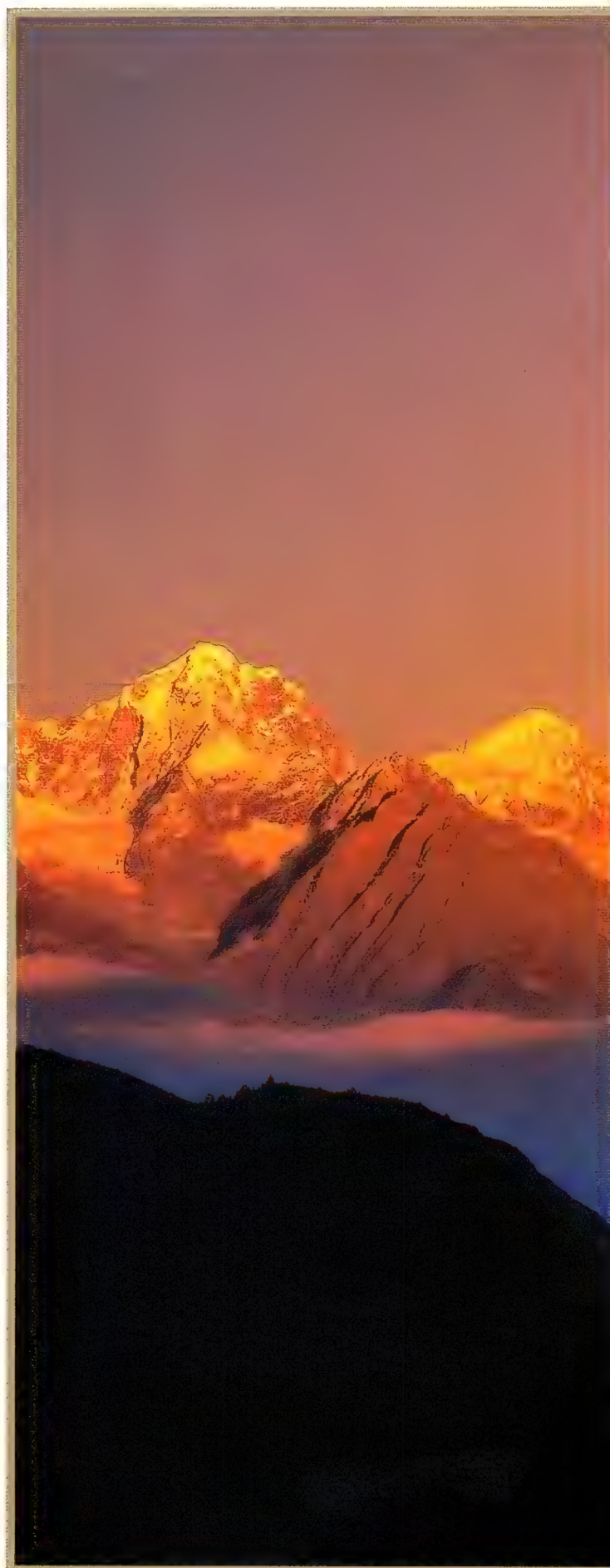
THE JOY OF PHOTOGRAPHING IN WESTERN SICHUAN

Photos & Article by Ling Dun

The abundant and grand Western Sichuan is undoubtedly the paradise for photography fans. Last October, I joined a 15-day photography tour to Western Sichuan. Apart from broadening my view, I brought back with many satisfactory works.



Laohu Lake, Jiuzhaigou (Mamiya 150mm, F8)





On the way to Kangding from Jiulong (Mamiya 150mm, F8, Cokin orange filter)

ITINERARY South and North Routes of Western Sichuan

Western Sichuan is the area of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, where Tibetan and Qiang people live. Our trip had two routes: south route and north route.

The south route: we first got down to Ya'an in the south from Chengdu, crossed the Erlang Mountain and Luding, visited Hailuo Gouge, then to Kangding and Jiulong, and finally returned to Chengdu. The north route: we then flew to Jiuzhaigou, then to Huanglong, Songpan, Diexi Lake and Taoping Qiang Village, and finally to Miyaluo to see the autumn leaves before returning to Chengdu.

The south route mainly stood out for its mountainous views

while the north route for its elegant watery sceneries. The Erlang Mountain tunnel is the tunnel with the highest altitude in China. The metal chain bridge in Luding is famous to the world due to the battle in 1935, where the Red Army took the bridge. Hailuo Gouge is a glacier above altitude of 3,000 m. Moreover, the Zheduo Mountain, with an altitude of 4,298 m, which is a definite stop on the way to Kangding. Before arriving at Jiulong, we had to climb up a nameless peak of 4,600 m in altitude in the dark. The snow peak in the sunset was an extremely grand view.

Western Sichuan has various styles of sceneries and changeable climate, which enrich the elements for photography. When we visited the lakes and streams at Jiuzhaigou, we saw the fascinating landscape and a background of falling autumn leaves.

One night before we climbed up the mountain, it was snowing heavily. Huanglong was all covered by snow. On the peak, we could only see the gleaming Huanglong Temple, and a whole view of snowy five-colour lake. It was just like a fairy tale.

PHOTOGRAPHY Lightest Equipments

As this trip focused on the Sichuan-Tibet Plateau outskirts, the key concern before setting out was whether our bodies could adapt to the plateau climate of above 3,000 m of altitude. In order to lessen the luggage and avoid altitude sickness, we had to leave many of our photography equipment home. I brought a Mamiya 7 II, equipped with three lenses: 43mm, 65mm and 150mm. Besides, I also took a Contax T3 to shoot features on the way. My 7 II was the lightest 6X7 camera and was very reliable, and it was more suitable for taking photos while climbing mountains.

As for film, I stock up with Fuji Velvia positive and supplemented with Kodak VS positive. All the negatives were Fuji Reala. My Velvia and VS could display the rich colour and abundant sceneries in Western Sichuan: the huge rocks with red moss in Hailuo Gouge, the white yaks on the side of Diexi Lake, the colourful waves in Peacock Lake, the splendid slope at Mugecuo, and the green tree and lakes at Huanglong.

As we did not take enough equipment, there were naturally some regrets. Since the

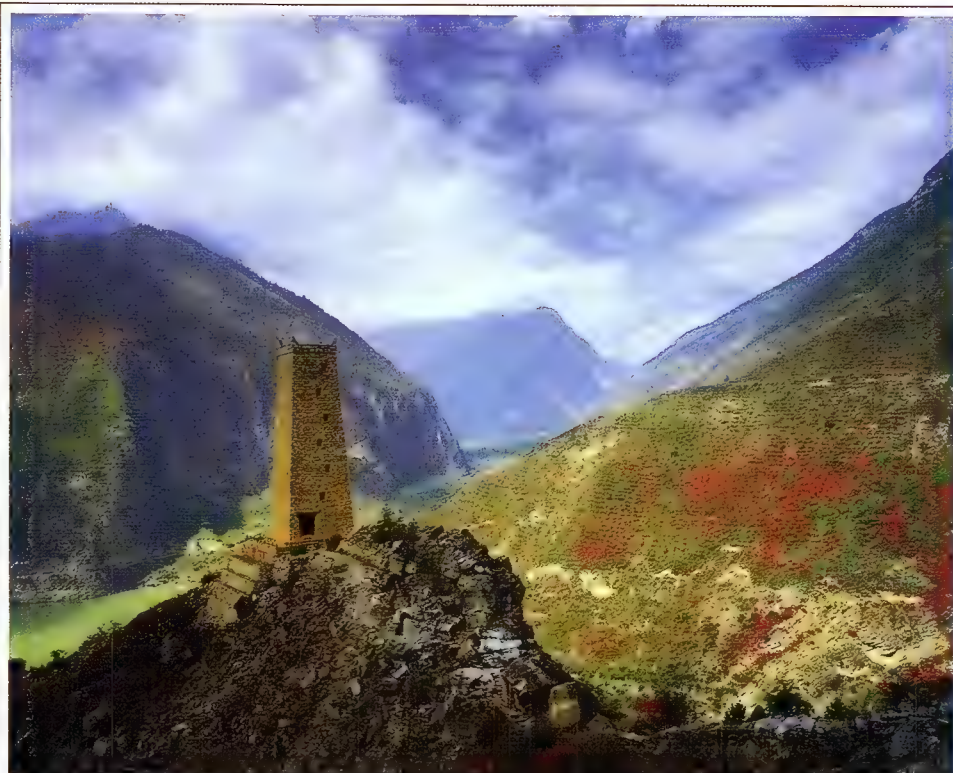


Winter scenery of Huanglong, Sichuan

7 II was a camera with distance detection on side axes, it was such an easy job to take photos of the mountain and water with the 43mm and 65mm lens. Yet, dealing with details was not convenient, especially when I was shooting objects of medium distance with my 150mm lens; it was quite difficult to focus accurately. I had to give up many details that worth taking. Another inconvenience was that the operation on the PL filter was rather complicated. Fortunately there was sufficient light on the plateau, and the dramatic colour of the sky and water was extraordinary rich that it didn't matter much whether to use a PL filter or not.

ACCIDENT Equipments kept Breaking and Missing

My T3 suddenly broke down and refused to load the film. I was also shock to find that the Foba superbball head broke lose on the bumpy road to Sichuan. Its screws began to loosen when I travelled down southwards. When it had a serious fall in Jiuzhaigou, it eventually collapsed. I had to resort to carry on with the Gitzo stand, which was so embarrassing. And that was not all, after several rounds, it got lost altogether. Fortunately other members in the group took turn to lend me a stand and saved me from frustration.



The architecture of Qiang people, Daxi Lake (Mamiya 43mm, F11)

SUMMARY Some Lessons

In the future, for any long trips, it is better to carry a mechanical camera and avoid models with distance detection on side axes. The speed-shooting lens such as 250mm can be used for shooting details. Protection is also very important. All equipments must be placed in the outside shooting case and should not be left on the stand while travelling on bumpy roads.



The white yak in the area of Daxi Lake (Mamiya 65mm, F11)



The statue of Songtsen Gambo and Princess Wencheng, Songpan Ancient Town (Mamiya 43mm, F16, Cokin gray filter)

A Day of A Railway Patrol

Photos & Article by Cao Zhizheng

Train is one of the most popular transports in China. However, travellers often take their comfort and safety for granted and they rarely pay attention to the workers who safeguard the railway. These lonely "protective angels of voyagers" walk along the endless rails, maintaining the tracks and trains daily.

As a frequent traveller, I myself was guilty of overlooking railway patrols. Therefore, I decided to visit the Liangjiaping patrol section of Lanzhou Railway Bureau and spend a day with their workers.

Eight Hours. Twenty Kilometres. Ten Years.

I was walking along the Longhai Railway when I saw a small yellow dot moving on the horizon. It was a man walking calmly towards me along the railway with a spade on his shoulder, a straw hat on his head and a big satchel on his shoulder. He was Chen Shi, one of the railway patrols of Liangjiaping patrol area of Dingxi Section of Lanzhou Railway Bureau. He greeted me with courtesy but did not talk much; he just smiled humbly and led the way.

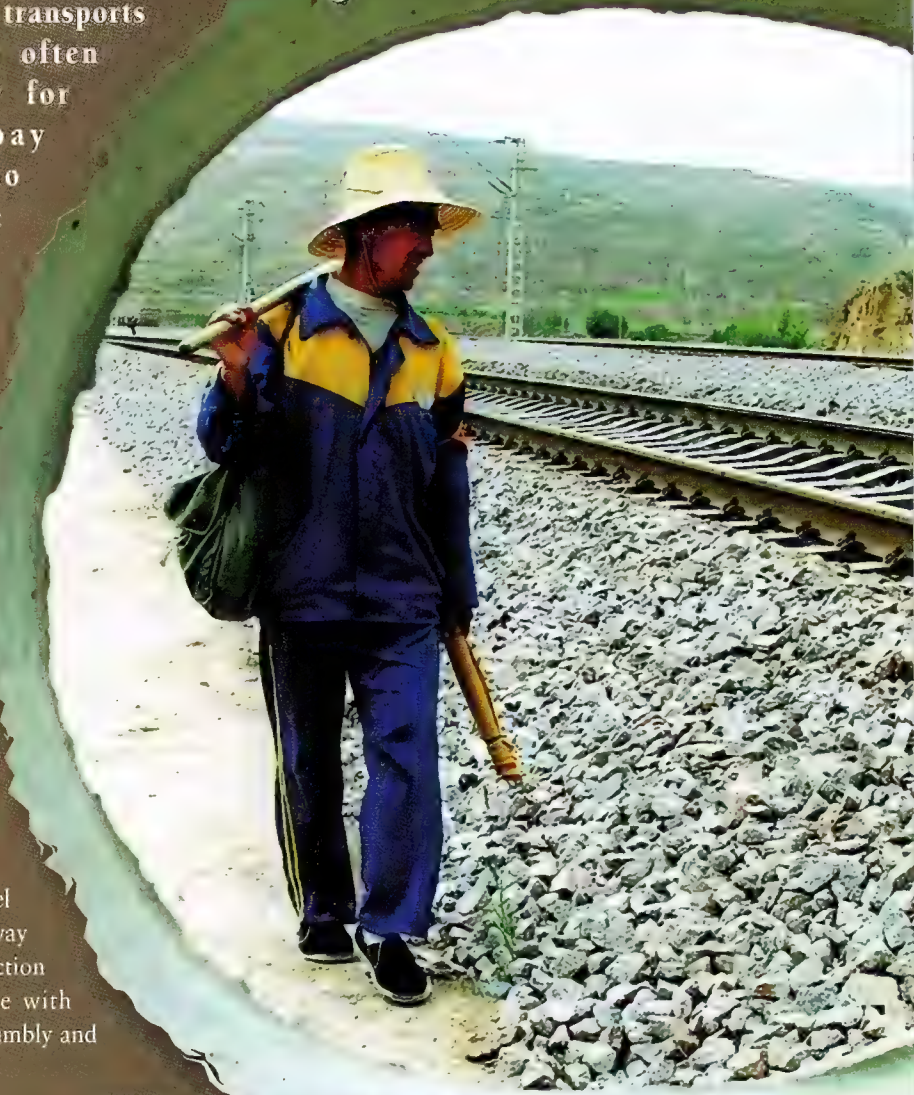
Chen Shi was 50 years old, and had been working on the railway since he was 18. He became a railway patrol 10 years ago, who walked 20 km for eight hours every day regardless of weather. His journey totalled over 60,000 km.

Five Kilograms of Tools

It was difficult for me to imagine a lonesome work life like this. Chen had no companion except for endless railways, running trains, as well as several "treasures" he carried day after day — straw hat to

and wire.

Railway patrols have to bring two more crucial emergency



protect from sun and rains, spade to root out grass along the railway, signal flag, wrench, walkie-talkie, track-side telephone, loudspeaker, mirror



tools that most of them may never use in their entire life: the siren and the torch. During emergency conditions, railway patrols will activate the siren or light up the torch so that the train captain can see it from afar and stop the train immediately. All these "treasures" weigh a total of five kilograms.

Shoes are extremely important for railway patrols as well. A pair of army boots needs to be replaced in less than a month.

The Five-Minute Handover Ceremony

Patrols are divided into three shifts each day. One can hardly image how daunting it is to walk along the railway alone in the dark night. Chen was on his morning shift when I visited him, which was from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. His task was rather simple and dull: taking a round trip on the 10-km railway and checking every single nail and screw to prevent accidents.

I followed Chen to walk the beat on the small path along the railway. He examined the rail as he walked, rooting out grass and fastening parts of the rail from time to time. When a train passed by, he saluted towards the train and raised his signal flag. He saw off the passed-by train while he listened attentively for any loose screws.

At noon, I looked at the other end of the railway, a small yellow dot, just like Chen, came in sight. It was another railway patrol, wearing the same uniform as Chen's.

Day by day they punctually meet at "1642", the mid-way between the two sections where these two workers set off, to exchange badges and information. The badge is a small bronze plate specially designed for

supervising railway patrols. It is carved with the identity number of its owner and bore significant safety responsibilities. The patrols keep the badge in a small bright red pocket. They can only hand it over to their colleagues at the handover spot, indicating that they have completed the journey.

In a short period of five minutes, they finished the "handover ceremony" and lighted up a cigarette for each other. After that, they walked along the same road and got back. This is the only time in a day for a railway patrol to meet his colleague. The same routine repeats tomorrow again.

Two Buns and A Cup of Herbal Tea

Chen walked in a moderate speed, and he talked in the same manner. He seldom spoke, perhaps due to years of solitude.

The Chen family lived in Anding District of Dingxi City, which was over 70 km away from where Chen worked. There were six members in his family, including his aged parents and children at school. Chen's wife stayed home to take care of the family. The whole family lived on his salary of ¥1,200. Chen lived in the accommodation provided by the railway section and only visited his family once a week. As he had to cook for himself, he had been living on noodles. At work, he often brought two buns and one cup of herbal tea with him. It took him eight hours to walk and inspected 20 km, and there was no time for eating. Chen had to eat as he walked.

Nine New Year's Eves on Railway

Weather in the northwest is unpredictable. In the few hours during our walk, we met gale, thundershower and burning sun. Chen said that he had gotten used to this. No matter how bad the weather was, once he was on duty, there was nothing in his mind but to examine the crossties and count the rail screws one by one.

At 4 P.M., I was about to wear out but Chen still kept walking calmly. Working as a railway patrol for ten years, he had neither made any mistake nor taken any long break. He simply walked along the railway during the day and sometimes at night, and he had already spent nine New Year's eves on the railway.

Before saying goodbye, Chen told me that he had to work for another five years before retiring at 55. His sincere smile also told me that he took great pride in his work.



1. The routine and repetitive work of a railway patrol ensures the safety of travellers.
2. Mirror helps to inspect small parts of the rail.
3. Chen has to stop from time to time and fasten the loose screws.
4. "1642" is the meeting point for railway patrols.

A Photography Town

PINGYAO



Pingyao is a 2,800 years old ancient financial hub in Shanxi. During the Qing Dynasty, the first money exchange bureau in China was set up here. Buzzing with traders and merchants, Pingyao's business network extended to the entire nation and

neighbouring countries.

As this old business centre hosts several consecutive annual International Photography Festivals in recent years, it gets a new identity as the "Photography Town".



The entertaining parade



Photographer dressed in traditional clothing for fun



The 2000-year-old town wall is the icon of Pingyao.

The opening ceremony
of the festival



When I was told that there was a photo exhibition, I rushed to Pingyao without a second thought. I jumped into a rickshaw and asked the puller to head to the exhibition venue. Glanced at my camera, he said, "Are you a photographer? On a sunny day, you should leave home at 4 A.M. Walk along the west main street, and go around the old alleys. It was quite interesting. When taking human portraits on the old street, take your time and be patient. After that, go to the town gate. Take an overview picture from above. Take everything easy, the competition award will then easily come into your hands."

"Are you a photographer?" I could not help asking.

"No."

The rickshaw pullers here have given numerous rides to

photographers and they are used to see Pingyao from a photographer's point of view. How to capture the fleeting moments of dawn and dusk? Where to find interesting people to shoot? These are the questions they know well.

A City without Enamel Brick

I stepped into the old government offices decorated by lanterns and banner. Countries flag were flying everywhere in the room. Here was the venue of the Opening Ceremony of the 4th Pingyao International Photography Festival. The ceremony began with a drum performance, followed by speeches given by local officials, guests and artists.

Unlike other government offices that worship national hero and historical figures, this government office worships the fox,

A sculpture of fox is placed in the shrine. The local told me that during the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976), the courtroom was used as government buildings. The only part remained untouched is the shrine for the fox as people were afraid of the spirit of divination.

The ancient town walls here put the city on the World Heritage list by UNESCO, and climbing them is a must-do for travellers to Pingyao. One cannot help feeling sentimental when overlooking into the distant land from the tower, as the wall separated two different worlds — outside the wall is the town with plain skyscrapers, and inside the wall is the well-preserved 2,800-year-old town. I looked around carefully, and found that there was not even one single piece of enamel brick used in the building. This was quite amazing, since enamel brick used to be the most popular material used in traditional Chinese architecture.

Founded by Emperor Zhouxuan (827-782 B.C.) during the West Zhou Dynasty, Pingyao has a history of about 2,800 years. The shrines, temples, courtroom, and buildings we see today are the Ming and Qing architectures of about 400 years ago. The residential buildings and transport networks were basically built between the 17th and 19th century.

I saw a group of tourists running towards the town walls to listen to the introduction given by the tourist guide. I joined the group and jotted down what the guide said. The town wall of Pingyao is 6,200 m long and 10 m high. Six town gates were built for military purpose, with four of them facing south, and those in the east and north facing east. Such a construction is exactly like a turtle, so Pingyao is also known as "Turtle Town". The ancient architects believed that in order to stop the turtle from crawling away, its left leg must be stretched and tied to one of the tower of the enclosure. On the walls, there are 72 towers of defense and more than 3,000 archery holes, which symbolise the Confucius' 3,000 disciples and those 72 excellent disciples who reached sainthood. However, during the Cultural Revolution, the bricks were taken away by the local people to build lavatories. Now, there are only two defense towers left.

An old man resting by the gate told me that in 1977 there was a serious flood, by which the Yinhui Dam was destroyed, 70 people killed, and local train service cancelled. Yet, Pingyao remained fine. The old town wall protects the people from the flood. It was only after the flood that 17 sections of the walls collapsed.

However, there was another incident, which was more frightening than the flood. In an attempt to "modernise" the ancient town during the 1980's, the local government of Pingyao planned to have the old mansions along the East Main Street and the county centre demolished. Such move met strong opposition from cultural scholars, and the local government was forced to give up the plan.

A Storage-Turned Gallery

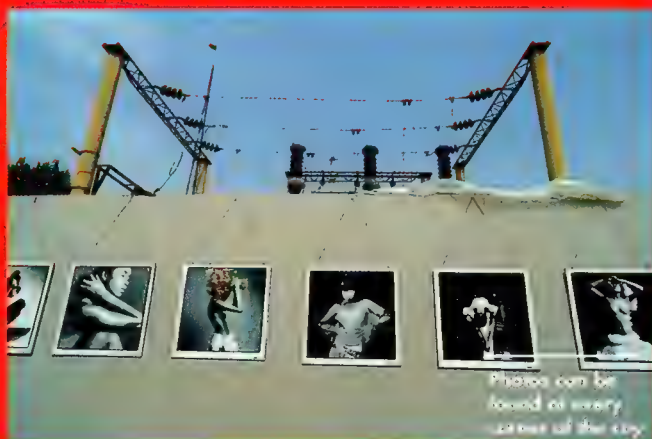
The photo festival has changed this ancient town into a photographing studio. The academic seminars also attracted prominent photographers, war photojournalists, photo editors and exhibition organisers. There were dozens of photo exhibitions showcasing 5,000 pieces of photo, and more than 300 photographers gathered here. Photographers were running around on the streets, and travel notes and photographing tips were posted on notice boards.

I walked along the street, wanting to find the venue for the exhibitions. To my surprise, the whole town, not only conventional exhibiting venue like conference room or hall, but also caves, courtyards, factories and even garages, was covered by photos. There was an empty garment factory being renovated into a studio, in which colourful pictures were hanging on the old weaving machines. Visiting one studio after another, I was fascinated by their novel ideas. It was evening, when I walked into a crowded, old storage decorated by huge pictures, which was another venue for slide shows and talks. Getting out of the storage after the show, I soon found that popular photographing spots, such as the old government offices and temple, were full of photographers already.

Wandering on the street, I met some friends from Henan, who invited me to their exhibition. I was amazed by the success



Factory turned gallery



Photos can be found at every corner of the city.



of the exhibition, as it attracted people from all backgrounds, from photographers and travellers, to merchants and farmers.

The Armed Escorts

I again walked along the main street. A performing group in traditional festive clothes was marching towards me with different banners in hands. The leader dressed up as the fortune god greeted me with a smiling face, followed by children holding gigantic golden coins. As they were the symbol of wealthy and fortune, people were eager to take photos with them. The most eye-catching figure was the armed escort who safeguard people's money in the old days. Carrying boxes of money, the leader often yelled out commands at the young boys.

The young boys in the team walked a bit and stopped a bit. Whenever they stopped, the leader of the armed escorts would command them to "fight". Their shining swords and the shrilling sound of rods earned them waves of cheers.

Nowadays, there are still a few armed escort businesses (known as "Biaoju" in Chinese) in Pingyao. Flourished from Song to Qing Dynasty, Biaoju works as the security guard to transport large sum of money. I visited "Huabei First Biaoju", where famous martial art masters of the Qing Dynasty, such as Wang Zhengping, Zuo Erba and Dai Erlu, once worked there. Since the 1900's, the business of Biaoju had died down, but its martial art lives on. Nowadays, "Huabei First Biaoju" is a training centre for martial artists and a gathering hub for martial arts lovers.

The hall displays 18 kinds of ancient weapon used by the armed escorts, including long spear, curved sword, golden drum, curved shovel, iron balls, double javelins, and long fish-teeth spears. In modern days, these weapons are no longer in use but only appear in martial art films.

The Hometown of Chinese Banks

Pingyao was once a financial hub of China.

Jin is another name for Shanxi. Jin Merchants, meaning merchants from Shanxi, prospered during the Ming Dynasty. A

lot of them were of Pingyao origin. According to historical documents, there were 54 types of business and 18 business organisations in Pingyao, such as money exchange bureaus, pawn shops, department stores, tobacco shops and tea shops.

In 1823, Rishengchang, the first money exchange bureau and the forbearer of banks in China, was established in Pingyao. In 1870, there were a total of 51 money exchange bureaus in China, out of which 22 were established in Pingyao. The tiny town itself had more than 400 branches of money exchange bureaus, that some of them even had branches in Osaka, Singapore, San Francisco and Moscow.

Rishengchang has now become a money exchange museum. I was surprised to see how simple the bank was: only 12 staffs working in the head quarter, and up to four staffs in each local branch. On the wall, there is the regulation of Rishengchang and a poem. However, this is not an ordinary poem; it contains confidential information of the bank. Once decoded, customers would know where to send their money to, and where to pick it up.

The inner court of Rishengchang is the office of the branch manager, who has a large heated brick-bed as his working place. Next to the court, there is a conference room, in which there is another brick-bed for guest and business partners. And this is the place where all the money of the bank was once hidden! I could not help laughing as I thought that this would only happened in films.

Located on the South Main Street, Huiyang Pawnshop, founded in 1753 and closed in 1929, the largest and most established pawnshop at that time, is now being renovated into a pawnshop museum. The attraction of the pawnshop is a bed carved with golden tiger, which is a symbol of high official. However, the owner of this house was not a real official; he only got his title through bribes.

Chinese Wedding for American-Japanese Couples

Pingyao is also well loved by foreign travelers for its unique culture and nostalgia air. They are fascinated with the old Chinese mansion with carved wooden windows, paper cuttings



Photo exhibition in the courtyard



Outdoor presentation



The ancient town wall

The wedding of Fukukishisu and Robert attracted many photographers.



and red lanterns. I sometimes even think foreign travellers enjoy Pingyao more than Chinese travellers.

Changxifeng is the largest guesthouse on Mingqing Street. On the day of my visit, a wedding took place here. Dressed in long down coat, Zhao, the former county secretary, was the host of the wedding. The bride and the groom were from two different nations.

The American groom, Robert, was a visual director of a museum in New York, and a renowned exhibition organiser. His bride, Fukukishisu, was from Japan. They have known each other for over a decade and got married in Japan three months ago. As they were both in Pingyao, they decided to have a Chinese wedding.

A traditional wedding in an ancient Chinese town full of photographers and journalists is surely a piece of top news. The owner of the guesthouse said nothing like this had ever happened before.

The guesthouse easily became the focus of the day; curious people were crowded outside, and a few hundred photographers arrived. The guesthouse had to be closed to reduce the number of visitors. Forty minutes passed, the bride was still putting on make-up. The groom solemnly sat down and Zhao inaugurated the

wedding ceremony. Following the Chinese custom, the groom grabbed some sweets from the table and threw them to the crowd.

Finally, the bride, wearing a traditional outfit and a scarlet shawl over her head, came out shyly. The wedding was conducted in an elaborated way and ended with a wholesome meal. When the ceremony was finished, a sedan chair was waiting outside, but the couples could hardly move since they were over a hundred blocking the way. In great difficulty, the couples shoved past the crowd to get into a sedan chair; yet, they were not able to escape from the photographers, who were surrounding the sedan chair. Robert could only ask the crowd to give way politely.

People following the couples along the street



Empress Dowager Cixi's Delight

Walking around the ancient town at night was another experience.

A rainy night gave a glossy finish to the stone-paved road. Being one of the biggest business centre in Qing Dynasty, the old town is full of footprints left by different kinds of people. Today, their stories seem to be all washed away by the rain and the old business centre has become a photography heaven.

The busiest street of Pingyao is Mingqing Street. From South Main

Street to the east, and West Main Street to Yingxun Gate, there were street stalls, antiques shops and handmade cotton shoes shop. I tried to imagine how was it like in Qing Dynasty but I was too hungry. I got a baked wheat cake from a street stall, and munched on it as I walked along.

I got into Changshengyuan, a favourite wine store of Empress Dowager Cixi, who once came to Pingyao and fell in love with the local brewed Shaoshing wine. She therefore

ordained the wine cellar a character "Chang" (means "long"). Now, there is still a portrait of Cixi in the store.

Empress Dowager not only loved the wine, but also the razor-thin slices beef. She even envied the shop-owner and thought he was blessed, as he was able to have the beef everyday. When she left, she asked her servant to bring some beef with them. I also bought myself a big piece and found it tender and juicy.

Travel Tips

Admission: ¥120

Transport:

Train: Taiyuan, capital city of Shanxi, can be reached from major Chinese cities. Change to a train for Pingyao after arriving Taiyuan. Pingyao train station is in the northwest of the county.

Driving: Driving from Taiyuan to Pingyao takes about two hours.

Getting around: Pingyao is small, that walking is the best way to get around. It is also possible to hire a motorcycles and rickshaw. The ride costs about ¥2.

Scenic Spot: Town walls (start from the East Gate and go clockwise all the way to the North Gate); Rishengchang; Courtroom (shows at

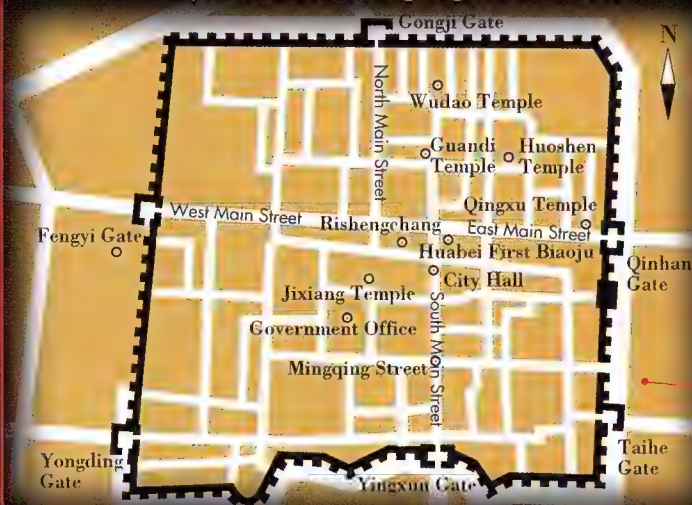
3 - 4 P.M.). Shuanglin Shrine, Wangjia Dayuan, and Zhenguo Shrine outside the town are also worth visiting.

Local delicacies: Maoerduo (noodles); Shuijianbao (pan-fried steamed bun); Jiaroubing (bun with meat); Zhuwowo (cooked corn muffin); Zijianjian (noodles); Huixiangcaifan (Sweet Fennel steamed rice) and Pingyao beef.

Peak Season: April to November

Accommodation (the most popular guesthouses are as follows):

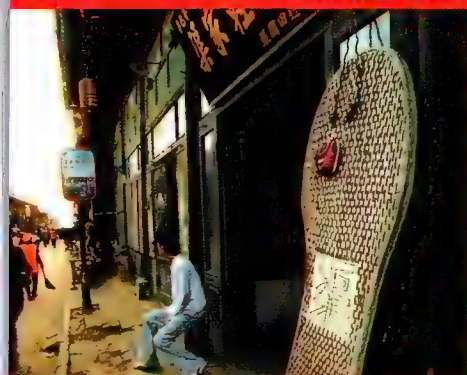
Dejuyuan Ethnic Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 5266
Changxinglong Ethnic Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 4188
Yuanjincheng Ethnic Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 0944
Changtaorong Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 0172
Deshengyuan Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 0788
Xirentai Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 0888
Jintaichang Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 3211
Yuantaichang Guesthouse	Tel:(86 454) 568 6188
Lizeyuan	Tel:(86 454) 576 7888



Ancient style hand-made cotton shoes

Donkey cart ride allows travellers to enjoy the ancient city.

Shaoshing wine at Changshengyuan







Tuwa People's

Quest to Regain a Lost Innocence

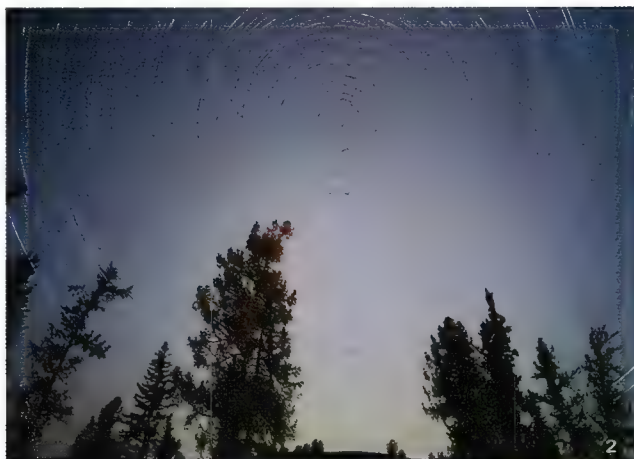
Photos & Article by Zheng Ligang

Overshadowed by the famous Kanas Lake of Xinjiang, the quiet Baihaba Village hidden among the mountains 20 km northwest from the lake remains relatively unknown. The ethnic people who live here, Tuwa, can be mistaken as Mongolians at first sight. However, after getting to know them better, one will be fascinated by their unique culture and customs.

As Kanas Lake increases its popularity every year, what are Tuwa people's choices when faced with Xinjiang's rapid economic and tourist development?

I first heard of Tuwa people when travelling in Kanas Lake. Our guide pointed to the forest in the distance and said, "The land behind the forest live the Tuwa people." This description was just like the opening of a fairy tale and gave the name "Tuwa" an air of mystery. I was then told that in the village, marriage with outsiders is strictly forbidden. Tuwa people are still isolated from the outside world, and thus their old customs are well preserved. They claim that they are the descendents of Mongolian, but they do not understand Mongolian and speak only their own language.

Driving on the paved road leading to Kanas Lake, I wondered what this fairy-tale-like village had become after the pressure of tourist development. The first thing that met my eyes were the Tuwa wooden houses with cable wire on the roof and advertisement on the wall. People waited with their horses at the entrance of the village to solicit business. I was somehow disappointed. When I heard about the Baihaba Village deep in the mountain, I went there with a hope to see and experience the real Tuwa culture.



Farthest to the Northwest

Passing through the Kanas Natural Reserve, we drove to Baihaba Village, which is more than 20 km away from Kanas Lake.

The car bumped along the narrow winding path on Altay Mountain. The dense forest and boundless grassland looked really beautiful. Our car climbed a few mountains, and finally arrived Baihaba Village.

We continued northward and stopped on a highland. Our driver said that we could not go any further since a sentry post was in front of us. This meant we were standing on the boundary between China and Kazakhstan.

Baihaba Village is at the farthest to the northwest of China's territory. There is Russia in the north, Kazakhstan in the west and Mongolia in the east. The highland we were at is the best place to have a full view of the village.

Getting into the village amidst a sea of birch trees, I found the fairy-tale-like wooden house scattered in the forest. The two-level houses are built with logs. The lower level is a square with more than a metre of pillars rooted in the ground. The upper level is a flat roof covered with soil. Such wooden houses are rain-resistant and have good insulation. These functions are essential for Tuwa people to survive the winter, since the village will be covered by snow of more than one metre deep. Tough and simple are the best words to describe the houses as well as the Tuwa people.



Suolongge: the Tuwa Scholar

We headed to the charming village directly from the highland. A traditional Tuwa house next to the road has a banner that says "Getting to know Tuwa People". The owner was talking to some travellers when we got in. Suolongge, the owner of the hotel, is a scholar of Tuwa culture.

Suolongge was born and brought up in Baihaba Village and his family lived here from generations to generations. When he was 53, he retired from the Education Department of Habahe County, where he worked as the deputy director. He renovated his house into the guesthouse, with a dream to introduce Tuwa culture to travellers. Indeed, he is the best person to do this job, since he is a native of Tuwa and speaks excellent Mandarin. Because Tuwa people do not have written language, it is important to have someone like Suolongge to promote Tuwa culture. He is also good at playing Xoor, the traditional music instrument of Tuwa people. Working in the village for years, he built a school for Tuwa children, and is also the author of a

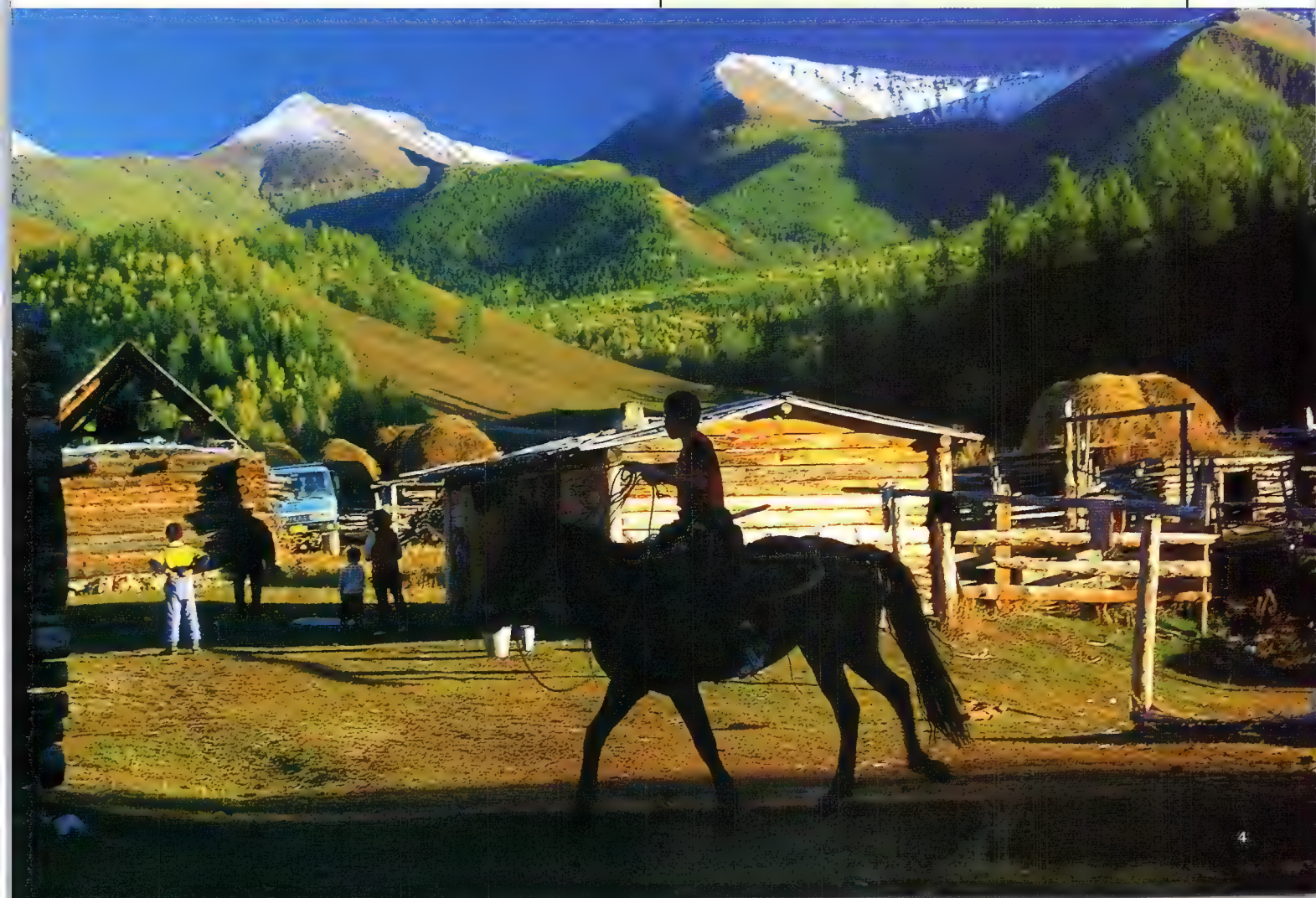
1. Suolongge (middle) and his family
2. The sky above Baihaba Village is bright and enchanting.
3. Sunlight shining through the leaves of white birch trees
4. The wooden houses of Tuwa people

History of Tuwa People

Tuwa is also known as Duwa or Kukumenqiake. Dating back to the Sui (581 - 618) and Tang (618 - 907) dynasties, Tuwa people were already regarded as an ancient ethnic group of China, and were called Dubo and Tuba at that time.

Tuwa people, originated from Baikal Lake of Russia, were nomadic groups mainly lived in the upper reaches of Jenisej River in south Siberian. They are a branch of Mongolian and belong to the same clan with the people of Tuwa Republic of Russia. During the sixth century, the Turk Khan State was founded in the place where Tuwa people lived so the Turki language and shamanism were then introduced. They later moved to the south of Xinjiang and central Asia due to wars. Living with the Mongolians for centuries, Lamaism also became Tuwa people's religion. Tuwa people were one of the first groups that Genghis Khan unified in the 12th century. It was the time in history when Tuwa people became a branch of Mongolians.

Tuwa people are not listed as an ethnic minority group in China. With a population of about 2,600, Tuwa people mainly live in Kenas, Hemu and Baihaba villages. According to Suolongge, Tuwa people in Baihaba Village are the descendents of Mongolian frontier guards while Tuwa people in Kanas Village are the descendents of the aborigines of Tuwa people.



history book on Tuwa people. Suolongge is well-known after being on air at CCTV.

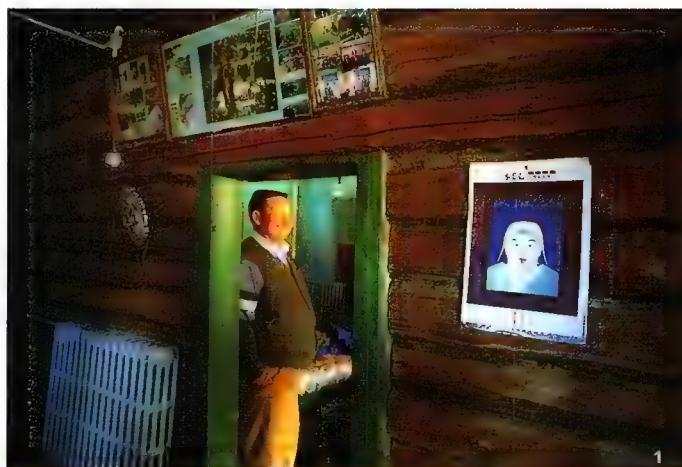
The Well-Preserved Tradition

Winter in Baihaba Village is particularly long. Snow comes in October every year. Summer is the best time of the year when the mountain is covered by blossoming flowers. Soulongge showed us some pictures. Pointing to the wild flowers, he said, "This piece of grassland of more than a thousand hectares will turn into a bed of flowers in June each year. And this is the most

gorgeous time of the year."

Located in remote area, Baihaba Village has limited transportation to the outside. People here still lived a primitive life of hunting and herding. Their daily diet consists of barley, fried flour, mutton, potatoes, butter, milk tea and fermented milk.

Deeply influenced by the Mongolian religion and custom, Tuwa people all have paintings of Genghis Khan in their wooden houses, which is the spiritual support of Mongolian people. They also believe in Lamaism and also hold the nature in great reverence because of ancient shamanism. Tuwa people hold ceremonies activities to offer sacrifices to mountains,



Heaven, trees, aobao (heap of sand, stone or earth laid out as a road marker or boundary sign by Mongolians) and Buddha. Moreover, people recite scriptures every year.

Most of the Tuwa people are in consanguineous marriage due to isolation and keeping the tradition of clan blood relationship. As a result, the population of Tuwa people has decreased rapidly. Yet, they still do not want to leave their beautiful homeland. Most Tuwa people have never left Altay Prefecture for their whole life, and furthest they go are nearby counties like Habahe and Burqin.

Baihaba Village is divided into two small villages by the road leading to outside, with Tuwa people living in left and Kazak people in right. They live peacefully together but retain their own way of life and customs. Suolongge said, due to different religious beliefs, Tuwa girls can marry Kazak man but not the other way.



caterpillar fungus. Nowadays, increasing outsiders come in to steal their resources such as fungus and pine nuts. People in the village have formed groups of patrols to protect the natural resources from being over-exploited.

Baihaba Village, perhaps the only fairyland left in northwest China, still keeps its old intact tribe and practices — maintaining the clan blood relationship. Tourists coming into the village makes

Suolongge both delighted and worried. Local economy is of course improved, and indeed, the village is on its way to prosperity. At the same time, Suolongge is also worried that his hometown will be suffered from irreversible damages. Asphalt road has been built in the village and electric poles also have been set up. It is not the quiet and peaceful life of Tuwa people once lived, and they posed great threats and disturbance to their traditions, thoughts and values. Can Tuwa people still recover their way of life despite the lure of modernisation and materialism?

©

Worries of Suolongge

Suolongge told us that Baihaba has three "treasures" that made them rich — pine nuts, Altay sheep and Chinese

1. Painting of Genghis Khan at Suolongge's house
2. Tuwa people earn their living by selling pine nuts.
3. A group of Tuwa children
4. Tuwa people live among the snow-covered mountains, forest and grassland.



4



A Passion for Pu Opera

Photos & Article by Zeng Nian



When local villagers were still sleeping like a top before dawn, Pu Opera singers had already begun rehearsing on the large stage at the centre of Wuzhai Village in Yicheng County, Shanxi Province. The climate here was delightful in May. The traditional country fair in the village had opened a week ago. Every year people from the neighbouring villages would come to the fair for trading commodities and produce. Wuzhai Village, being the host village, had invited the Yellow River Pu Opera Troupe of Ruicheng County for New Year's celebration.

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Founded in 1947, Yellow River Pu Opera Troupe kept its repertoire over the years: the Case of Chen Shimei, Susan under Escort, Capture and Release of Cao Cao, etc. The troupe had 45 staff members under the leadership of Mr. Su Xuezheng, who was previously a band performer. The props, costumes, lighting and sound equipments were financed by Ruicheng County, while the everyday expenditure and salary of troupe members were paid by the performance revenue.

Pu Opera is a local opera that produces beautiful melodies by striking bangzi (clappers made of jujube wood). It was originated from the southwestern region of Shanxi Province. Located at the intersection of Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Henan provinces, this region was a place of vital strategic importance in Chinese history.

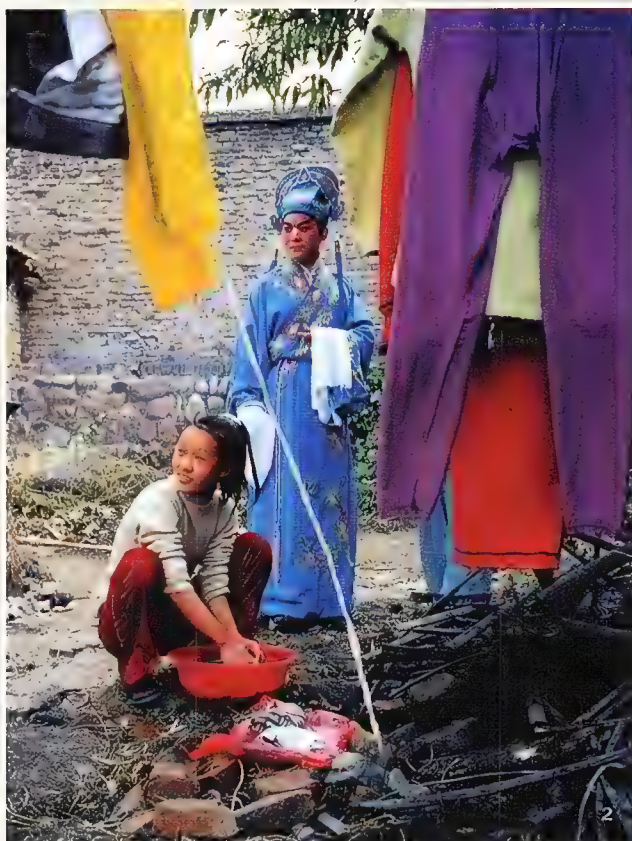
Yellow River Troupe usually spends seven and a half months every year on performing tour. Since farmers have no time for opera during busy farming season, the troupe is adjourned and its members are to return home to harvest.

The troupe is often invited to perform in temple fairs and traditional market fairs. Generally, the troupe spends a week to ten days in each performing destination. The members then build one or two cooking ranges as the mobile kitchen, and they may rest in the backstage or some vacant village houses. All performers work hard as they give an average of two up-to-four-hour performances every day. However, they are contented with their work because this is a labour of love.

I noticed that most apprentices of the troupe were young children from the countryside, and the youngest among them was 13 years old. They toured and lived with the troupe and received a small payment every month. They first trained to take the walk-on parts in performance. If they could acquire the basic skills of singing and acting within several years, they would be allowed to perform on stage. If not, they would be

1. Pu Opera performance often draws throngs of villagers.
2. The make-up of Pu Opera is similar to Peking Opera.
3. Most apprentices of the troupe are young children from the countryside.
4. Apprentices have to undergo rigorous training.





dismissed and sent back home.

Eighteen-year-old Xu Zhongli came from Huangxie Village, Nanwei Township of Ruicheng County. Xu had keen interest in learning Pu Opera. After graduating from junior high, she got permission from her parents to join the troupe. Since then she had stayed with the troupe for two years. Though Xu could join the small theatrical troupe in her village, which could give her a higher salary, she determinedly chose to stay with Yellow River Troupe. As to the reason, she said, "I can learn more in Yellow River Troupe. I think I will continue to stay after completing my apprenticeship." Once I watched Xu's performance. She was nervous but still performed the female role successfully. As the interviewers pointed out afterwards, she would have gotten a higher score if she had been a little more relaxed.

I had a taste about the harsh performance life when visiting them. The staffs of the troupe had only two simple meals daily. They ate steamed buns, steamed twisted rolls and rice porridge as their breakfast at 10 A.M. The other meal started at 4 P.M. More often than not, the troupe members were starved and exhausted. However, they persisted in their collective work without complaints.

Moving on to their next stop in Jiayi Township, Hancheng County of Shaanxi Province, the staffs began to take down the large curtain on stage, gather all the equipment and pack their luggage. After that, they loaded them onto the truck and tied

them tight and orderly. Finally, they got on a bus and left Wuzhai for the next destination.

The troupe stopped at the city gate of Yicheng County at noon. The staffs got off the bus to buy some food and drink for the long journey ahead. Sure enough, they got stuck on a road because of reconstruction after entering the mountainous area of Hancheng County. The road condition was horrible and the trip was long. It was getting dark when they finally arrived at Jiyi Township.

Since the performance was scheduled in advance, the troupe began to unload the equipment out of the truck and prepare the stage simultaneously. Given that the stage had not yet been supplied with electric power, the staffs hung the curtain and arranged the luggage in the appointed vacant house with torch lights. Some members had already built the earth stoves and the cooks were making a fire to boil water.

The power on stage was turned on after a while and everyone cheered and hurriedly put on their make-up. The make-up of Pu Opera was similar to Peking Opera: spreading oil dregs on the face first, then drawing facial make-up according to the role, and finally putting on the costume. Some



on his costume and facial make-up, he told me, "It is boring to stay home. So, whenever the Pu Opera troupe needs extra help, I will go wherever it goes."

The big curtain on stage was drawn up some minutes later. Yutangchun included 10 parts in entirety. The troupe performed two parts a day, and it took five days to finish the whole show. The stage in Jiyi became quiet at 1:30 A.M. The second part of Yutangchun would be performed in the next afternoon.

Pu Opera serves as the carrier of culture and history. With the accompaniment of bangzi melodies, Pu Opera will continue to pass on from generation to generation in the land of Shanxi.



roles would require performers to hang up their eyebrow by tightening the scalps — a nearly impossible task for an untrained performer.

It had been years since a performance given in Jiyi Township, and the town authorities finally funded the nearly two weeks of continuous opera performance. Local villagers had already waited anxiously on the square before the stage; they were bound to enjoy Pu Opera to their heart's content.

As usual, the senior performer Mr. Yang Lichao of Yellow River Troupe announced the commencement of the performance Yutangchun. Mr. Yang had started his opera career since 1957. After retirement, he stayed with several Pu Opera troupes. While putting

1. Resting in the backstage
2. The life as an opera performer is harsh. One needs to work long hours and live on the go.
3. The staffs of the troupe usually eat steamed buns and steamed twisted rolls.
4. A "mobile" lavatory
5. Since no performance had been given in Jiyi Township for years, the crowd waited anxiously before the stage for the opera performance.





Ten years ago, many struggling painters settled in Fuyuanmen Village near the Peking University. The media broadly reported their lives, and this place was then called the "Painter Village". The artists later turned to Dafen Village of Buji Town, Shenzhen, for more opportunities. Thanks to the local government's encouragement and its vicinity to Hong Kong, this place has become a painting market and a treasure place for visitors since its development in 1989, supporting nearly 10,000 artists. The first International Cultural Fair held here last year attracted numerous visitors and collectors worldwide, making this village even more famous.

Photos & Article by Huang Songhui

Many art undergraduates and experienced painters come here for career development, making this tiny place bustling.





Mr. Zhang from Jiangxi Province has been running a small "Celebrity Gallery" by himself since his graduation from the academy of art. He draws nothing but celebrities.

Oil painting galleries occupy up to 80% of the shops in Dafen Village. Everyone learns to master the paintbrush at an early age in this "painter village".



Tourist Guide of Dafen Village

- Pass the Buji Line 2 Gate with a valid re-entry permit or re-entry card.
- Traffic: A taxi ride from the Luohu Port (red, do not take a green taxi on the return trip) costs about ¥30. Buses and minibuses are available for direct access to Buji Town.
- You'd better go there in the morning or at noon to avoid the traffic jam after 5:00 p.m.
- Bargain, bargain, bargain. Shop around first, and if you need to buy in bulk, ask the seller to help transport.



The art commodities at the Painter Village are dazzling. One needs insight to pick among imitated paintings. The elaborate work at high-class galleries can be quoted at up to ¥80,000 a piece.

At the entrance of Dafen Village, a large mural on a building wall shows the charm of the village. Art shops are standing side by side: oil painting galleries, traditional Chinese painting stores, picture frame decorations, porcelain engravings, art materials, gifts and choice goods, ceramics stores and coffee galleries. The four-square-kilometre small village is a kaleidoscope of art; it has over 300 art stores.

Oil painting galleries occupy up to 80% of the shops in Dafen Village. More than 10,000 migrants have swarmed into this peaceful village (a former population of merely 300), including over 8,000 apprentices!

During my first visit to Dafen Village several years ago, I was attracted by the unique artistic atmosphere. I, having studied oil painting in my childhood, felt as if I were returning to the old days when strolling the streets here and smelling the familiar odour of oil paints. Looking at the apprentices and painters working in front of the easel at the gallery, I had the itch to paint. The sketches drawn by apprentices were sold at incredibly low price — an one-square-metre oil painting was sold at about ¥20 only!

Many art undergraduates and experienced painters come here for career development, making this tiny place bustling. Some small galleries and painting workshops have eventually grown into large companies, and they even wholesale their products to the West.

Mr. Zhang from Jiangxi Province has been working here since his graduation from the academy of art, running a small "Celebrity Gallery" by himself. He draws nothing but celebrities. His elaborate works of Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai, Qi Baishi, and the like are so vivid that orders have to be scheduled, and the price of each portrait could be as high as ¥20,000.

The Yu Mo Xuan located in a lane is a porcelain engraving shop. Zhang Xiangfeng, known as the "old tree in a remote mountain", is an unpretentious man from Henan. His distinctive painting, calligraphy and ingenious porcelain engraving skills tugged at every heartstring. Although his shop is away from the busy avenue, his works attract countless customers.

The art commodities at the Painter Village are dazzling. One needs insight to pick among imitated paintings. The elaborate work at high-class galleries could be quoted at up to ¥80,000 a piece. And traders from America, Taiwan, Europe and Southeast Asia could snatch these goods up in a flash!

Formerly, Dafen was but an ordinary village. In 1989, Huang Jiang, a gallery owner from Hong Kong, began to organise painters and apprentices for mass production of paintings for export to the West. Over these years, with the active support from the local government, the Painter Village has been developed rapidly.

Today, the villagers are renting their renewed houses to painters and apprentices from different places. These unnoted houses have now become shops artists scrambled for. An about 20-m² street shop can be leased for ¥3,000, and its upper floors can be used for training and exhibition. Here we see that art and commerce aren't the natural enemies they are often made out to be.



The blind
massagers made
a strong
impression on me
when I visited
Kunming.

Hope in their

Photos & Article by Patrick Blanche

Massage has been a form of therapeutic treatment in traditional Chinese medicine since ancient times. Before 1950, blind people, like street performers such as story tellers and singers, had a very modest social position. But today's economic development changes all that; blind people can now have wider employment opportunities, and many have become massagers.

Although blind massagers mainly work on the streets, they are registered with the association for blind people.

China has approximate nine million blind people. Most suffer from cataract problems from birth and some are simply burnt by strong sun in high altitude due to the lack of eye protection. Like many of the 50 million disable people, they are now solicited by government and the society. Since the birth of the China Association for the Blind in 1988, their condition has gotten much better. The past six years is the period when blind massagers and massage clinics operated by blind people grow the fastest; there are now more than 40,000 professional blind massagers across China.

Special centres are established to certify and train blind massage professionals as well as to hold annual exam. Blind massagers are classified in four professional levels: junior, intermediate, senior and master. Some work for the hospitals but most of them work in the streets. Their distinctive trademark of white uniforms are well known by the population and people respect them.

I had a strong impression about blind massagers when I visited Kunming one Saturday afternoon. In a busy corner near the crowded central market place, about 20 men and women dressed in white long suits sat close to one another. Some were serving customers and busy massaging, and some were just hanging out, taking a rest while waiting for new customer, or curious foreigner such as myself. As I was fascinated by theses



blind massagers who had taken giant steps towards independence, I decided to hire their service. Of course, I also longed to treat myself after a month of travelling.

My friend Dominique and I were amazed by this on-the-spot massage service, which was totally unheard of at home in Europe. When I first heard about it, I immediately suspected that it was a con to deceive shy Chinese women into feeling safer about baring their naked bodies to men. I didn't expect the massage service would be so "open"!

Price started from ¥12 for a half-an-hour shoulder massage, up to ¥30 for a full body massage. The price was right.

"Full body massage, please," I requested.

"Just take your jacket off," Li, an energetic woman, offered me a chair.

Overhearing my conversation in French, she smiled with narrow eyes that flickered constantly and uncontrollably, then she squatted and started massaging my legs.

She spent 10 minutes on each of my leg, looking for the points to revitalise my tired muscles. I stood up but she then kept me in her "magic" hand for another massage on the neck. The finishing touch, a face massage, was rather interesting. After rubbing my ears for what seemed like an eternity, she then turned my head to one side, folded my ear over, covered it with her palm and tapped the back of her hand very rapidly, just like what a doctor does when he checks breathing with a stethoscope. This move sent a mute echo through my head.

Surprisingly, it was not an unpleasant experience.

When I got up, I felt a surge of energy running through my veins. Our Chinese friend Lugu, a famous painter in Kunming, translated our questions.

"It is amazing that I can help others with my own hands despite being disabled, and it is very encouraging that we can restore health and relax people," Li said proudly. She told us that she could earn more than ¥1,500 in a good month. She seemed happy that she could now earn a living on her own as well as win the respect of her patients.

More national revenue has been devoted to the welfare of blind people, such as granting them the rights to use local transport free of charge. Li hoped that the city would provide more facilities suitable for people with impair vision in the future.

Jiang, who was massaging my friend the day before, diagnosed the problems of an old lady as he massaged her cervical vertebra. "You are alright today," he said. This patient seemed to visit him regularly. He received more than 10 regular patients a day. A long working day was waiting for this very humble and devoted professional. He told us, "Although massage is not a magic pill, it can benefit people who are in pain and it is an important part of the Chinese traditional health care. This is a job suitable for people with sight impairment because we are attentive to details and have an acute sense of touch."



Grassland Rat Hunters

Photos & Article by Li Dong



Lying on the ground, Gong Baojia fixed his eyes on two small holes, which are only a step apart. He blocked one hole with his right wristband and then gave puffs into the other. Within a minute, he stood up with a rat in his right hand.

Rat Runs from the Wind

Gong is a herdsman who lives in Kequhe grassland in Henan Mongolian Autonomous County. The way he catches rats is called the "puff method". Since rats run from the wind, blowing into one hole will make them get out from the other.

Kequhe grassland is densely covered with rat holes, looking like an enlarged beehive. Squeaks of rats can be heard everywhere. There are two types of grassland rats: the manx and the zokor. The manx is also known as tailless rat, which is active on the ground. Apart from eating the grass, it also digs holes and unearths grass roots. The zokor is active underground and eats grass rhizome and destroys vegetation.

Since these rats eat up the grass, they put livestock in danger. They also dig holes, unearth grass roots and build mounds, which will cause soil erosion. Such degradation will reduce the land into secondary bare soil.

The picturesque Qinghai Province has suffered severely from rat plague in recent years; about a third of the province's grassland (ten million hectares) has been damaged by rats. In order to protect their pastureland and homeland, local herdsman are now in action.



Campaign against Rats

Standing on his pastureland, Qieshi Qiong, a local herdsman, felt helpless. "Because of damages caused by rats, I have to cut down the numbers of sheep. Last year, I didn't sell a single one," he said.

The grassland near his house has thin vegetation dotted with pieces of bare soil. This piece of land is covered by numerous holes and mounds caused by the zokor.

Qieshi Qiong said there is no effective way to get rid of the rats. In 1983, the government lent him 113 ha of grassland. He raised 150 sheep and 60 cattle, but the number of livestock decreased gradually as a result of a rat plague. A ground rat consumes about 50 g of grass a day while an underground rat 204 g. Generally, a rat breeds once a year and can deliver four to five rats.

"The local government organises campaign against rats every year. Last year we couldn't wait anymore so we pulled a fund. I spent ¥1,300 on rat poisons but didn't get the expected results. This year the plague is as destructive as last year." A sum of ¥1,300 means a lot to Qieshi Qiong, who owes the bank more than ¥10,000. Because of reduced forage grass, he raised only 110 sheep and 30 cattle last year.

A Sheep for a Rat

It is estimated that every year rats in Qinghai consume 10.85 billion kg of fresh grass and damage 456 million kg of fresh grass by digging holes. If one kilogram of grass costs ¥0.1, the annual direct economic loss is ¥1.13 billion.

The total area of bare land is 1,300 ha in Henan County and more than 0.67 million ha in the province.

The campaign against rats in Henan County began between the 1960s and 1970s. By 1990, ground rat plague was generally under control when the county leadership introduced the "A Sheep for a Rat" campaign. At that time, Henan was known as "the county free from rat plague". However, a year later, the rats hit the county again.

Qinghai invests more than five million yuan a year in rat control. Comparing to the 8.4 million ha of grassland suffering from rat plague, this sum is too little. Henan County plans to treat all the rat-stricken area this year, but due to a shortage of fund, it has only covered 48,330 ha against ground rats and 13,330 ha against underground rats.

Rat Hunters Using Bows and Arrows

The rat hunter team working at Qulehegaba grassland is

from Gansu Province. Zhou, the leader, explained that underground rats have poor eyesight and therefore mainly depend on hearing and touch. They usually build mounds to block their holes for self-protection. What the team does is to remove the mounds and place a bow with an arrow on it. When the rat runs to the mouth of the mound to block it again, it will trigger the shooting arrow.

At first, each member usually catches more than 100 rats a day, but as the rat population is now much decreased that one can only catch five to six rats a day. Zhou's five-member group has so far caught more than 45,000 rats, and is paid ¥0.35 for each rat. Rat bones can treat rheumatic disease and therefore can be sold at a price of ¥260/kg. The rat hunters work during the day and camp on the grassland at night. The pillow they sleep on is made of dried sheep wastes and the water they drink comes directly from Zequ River.

For the rats that are active underground, poisons don't affect them much. Although bows and arrows are proved to be effective weapons, they are not perfect since they can only

kill big rats.

Local herdsman usually spray poisons to kill rats at a large scale. But this approach causes secondary poisoning that not only contaminate the natural landscape but may also poison the cattle and sheep. Later biotechnology is introduced to improve the poison that secondary poisoning can now be avoided.

Introduction of Rats' Natural Enemies

In the 1970s and 1980s, before hunting practice becomes common, carnivores such as fox, yellow weasel and hawk, which are the natural enemies of rats, could be seen everywhere on Qinghai's grasslands. Rats were not as rampant as they are now.

Local authority has promoted the population of hawk to reduce rats. This approach has achieved immediate effect. On the 2,600-ha grasslands in Madoi County, the number of rat hole has been reduced by three times.

Last year, Henan County made efforts to attract hawks and yellow weasels too. In the meantime, the county is trying to restore the original ecological species to the damaged bare land through artificial seeding.

1. Professional rat catchers working in rat-stricken areas
2. "Puff method" invented by local herdsman
3. Rat plague caused serious destruction.



ON THE WAY

My Travel Journal

Mt. Sanqing

Photographers' Heaven

Photos & Article by Zhong Weiguo

As the sister mountain of world-known Mt. Huangshan, Mt. Sanqing has strangely shaped rocks and fantastic pine trees. It is an ideal alternative for photography buffs.

Bringing all my photography equipments, we arrived Mt. Sanqing. As one of the national key scenic areas, Mt. Sanqing is a Daoist holy land as famous as Mt. Wudang in Hubei. Mythological stories tell us that the three peaks of Mt. Sanqing, Yujing, Yuxu and Yuhua, lived the Daoist ancestors Yuqing, Shangqing and Taiqing. That is the reason Mt. Sanqing ("three qing") gets its name. Among the developed scenic areas there are the Nanqing Garden, Tiyun Ridge, Yujing Peak, the Sanqing Palace in the north and the newly developed West Scenic Area.



Walking among Clouds and Mists

Sanqing Garden Scenic Area is the highlight of Mt. Sanqing. Being the first tourist zone under development, the facilities here are comprehensive and well maintained. The scenes of "Sunrise in Cloud Sea" and "Penguin and Celestial Peach" are indescribably charming and vivid while that of "Ten Thousand Plates Greeting the Heaven" displays impressive grandeur. The most wonderful scenes, after all, are the Nushen Peak and Yujing Peak.

Nushen Peak is also known as Goddess Peak. With a height of more than 80 m, it looks like a handsome girl whose hair cut to her ears. Spring is the most beautiful season when the peak is surrounded by blossoming azaleas. Not far from the peak, there is a huge rock of 128 m high. Rising from the bottom of the valley, it looks like a giant boa. I stayed there for a few days for photographing; but the sky was too clear. It was not until the day before my departure that the clouds and mists appeared. Gathered in the bottom of the valley, the clouds and mists rose up quickly, making the rock looked like a giant boa flying out of the dark.

Yujing Peak, with an altitude of 1,817 m, is the summit of Mt. Sanqing that many travellers are put off by the steep slopes. However, once climbed to the top, they will know that all the hardships are worthwhile, since Yujing Peak gives a panoramic view of Mt. Sanqing, with Mt. Huaiyu and Xinjiang River in the distance.

Pines Growing out of the Ruins

After visiting Yujing Peak, I did not take the same route to get down, but went to Sanqing Scenic Area at the north. During the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 - 420), Ge Hong, a famous pharmacist, came to the mountain to practice Daoism and make pills of immortality; therefore many ancient buildings and Daoist cultural relics have been left at the foot of the mountain. Sanqing Palace, one of those relics, is now a ruin. Amazingly, the pine trees grown there give visitors a pleasant surprise. Old but strong, with stretching roots and rough burls, these pine trees are just like miracles.

Longhu Hall is another ideal place for photographing, thus I stayed there overnight and climbed the peak next morning. It was a fine day and the sky was completely clear. In the east horizon, a glimpse of light appeared and the red sun rose, that the mountains and forests are just liked being covered by a golden veil.

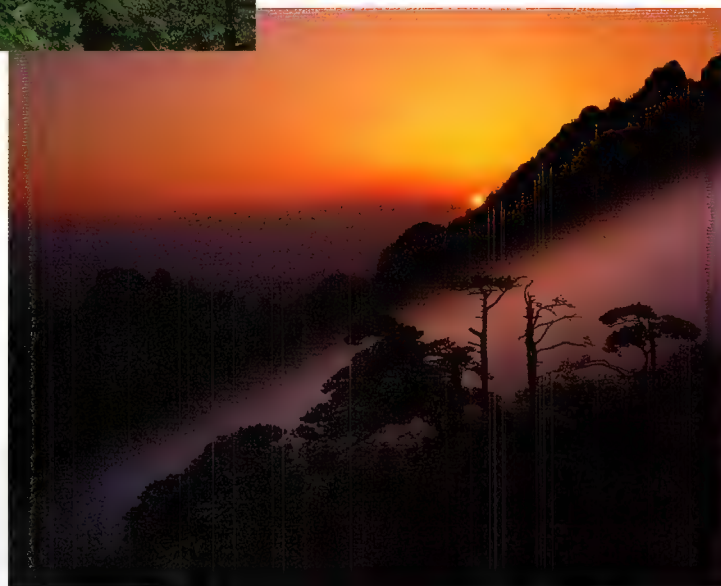
After leaving this scenic area, I took the west trail and

returned to the South Mountain. The four kilometres long plank road, taking travellers to the new scenic spots without the hardships of climbing over the Yujing Peak, was built in May last year. When we reached the South Mountain, it began to rain. In Mt. Sanqing, whenever there is rain, there must be mist. So we ran to the Vista Pavilion on Tiyun Ridge. The clouds and mists accumulated quickly and rose up with the wind, making the distant peaks and pine trees a blur picture. After five minutes, when the clouds and mists reached the top of the mountain, the landscape became peaceful as usual.



Travel Tips

Transport: Mt. Sanqing is located in Yushan County, Shangrao, Jiangxi. Minibuses run between Shangrao and Yushan. It takes 1.5 hours and costs ¥12. In Yushan, you can get a bus to Mt. Sanqing. It takes two hours and costs ¥16.
Admission: ¥100
Cable car: ¥55 (up), ¥45 (down)
Accommodation: It costs ¥50 - 80/person to stay in a clean and well-equipped hotel on the mountain. There is a limited choice of food and they are expensive. So you are advised to bring your own.



Bitter Sweet **Lugu Lake**

Photos & Article by Wu Jingsi

During Spring Festival, I revisited Lugu Lake with four friends but I was somehow disappointed as urbanisation destroyed the quiet life of the village. In my first visit about half a year ago, we could take a quiet walk on the lakeside; but now there are more visitors than residents in Lige Village. The bus charge was confusing and on our way we met many greedy drivers who overcharged travellers.

Meeting up in Lijiang, Xu (one of my friends) and I looked for a car going to Lugu Lake. Finally, in a hotel, we bought our return tickets for ¥120 each. When we were setting off, however, the driver said our tickets were invalid. He returned each of us ¥40, and said he would take us there for ¥80; but when we returned we had to buy another ticket, which would cost ¥60. We did not bother to argue anymore, and accepted the offer.

Far from the Crowd

We set off at 8:30 A.M. as it was scheduled, and arrived Lige Village at 3:00 P.M. Getting out of the bus, I saw many hotels and restaurants along the lakeside, which was quite different from what I saw a year ago. I visited my friend Zaxi, who is a hotel owner. We, together with other two travellers in the bus, planned to stay in Zaxi's house, but there were not enough bed. So, four of us went to stay in his old hotel on the peninsula.

I and Lou (a young girl we met in the bus) walked to a hill nearby to get away from the noisy crowd. We watched sunset in tranquility. After dinner, most visitors

went for the bonfire, which is a tourist programme. Xu and I visited the New Chatting Bar instead, where we could talk with other travellers.

The next day, we went to the hot spring village in the northwest of Yongning. Hot spring baths, with local people as the business target, are served in either open-air pools or rooms, costing ¥20 and ¥30 respectively. After lunch, we visited Qizhu, whom we got to know the year before, and stayed with her family for the night. She prepared a luxury dinner for us and kept offering us wine and rice while we were eating. She did not eat until we finished. The way that Mosuo people treat their guests is very touching.

In the evening, we came to the playground of the village's school and attended the bonfire party to celebrate children reaching adulthood. An old man first expressed his congratulations; then another man played a tune of traditional music and led a group of Mosuo people to dance around the bonfire. They formed a circle while singing and dancing. Children were so busy to offer the guests candies, melon seeds and drinks. Meanwhile, the dancers once and again invited visitors to join them and share their happiness. It is believed that Mosuo people are born singers and dancers. In fact, they also have their skills trained in bonfire parties like this.

The Trouble of Getting Back

We got back to Lijiang on the early morning during Chinese New Year. Before we left Qizhu's home, we put some money and gifts on the family shrine. Mosuo people believe that guests should be treated like their family members, thus they should not accept anything in return. So we left the token of our





thanks on the shrine as a respect for their ancestors.

On our way, a nice driver offered us a lift to Lige, though he was not clear where Lige was. In the village, we saw two travellers arguing with a driver, because they were charged a full fare for a car that is full. Oh, those drivers, money is the first thing in their minds.

We had to find a bus from Lige to Lijiang. Walking on the highway with our luggages, we fortunately stopped a bus going to Luoshui, from where we again had the good luck to find a truck to Ninglang. However, the greedy driver charged us ¥20 each, a fare equal to a scheduled bus!

From Ninglang, we took a bus and arrived Lijiang after 4.5 hours' drive. The first thing we did in the hotel was taking a hot bath to wash away the fatigue.



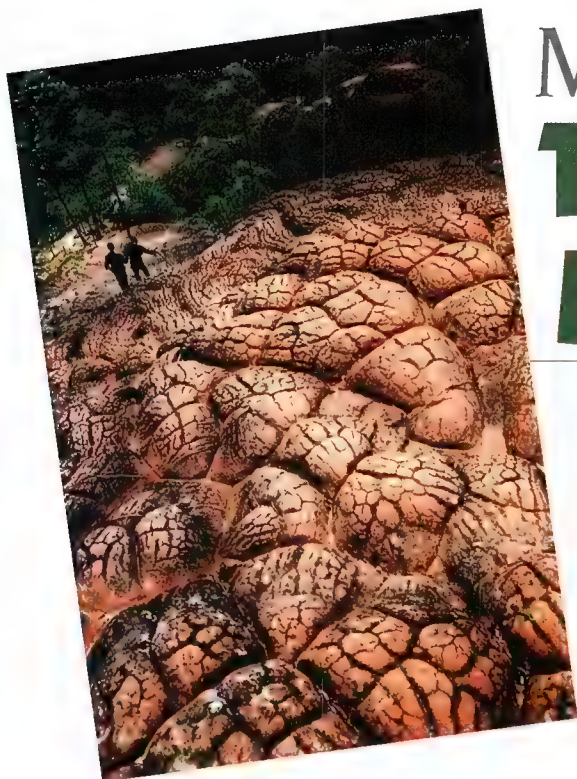
Travel Tips

Transport: There are buses running between Lijiang and Lugu Lake's Luoshui or Lige. A two-day return ticket costs ¥100 usually. The bus leaves Lijiang at 8:30 A.M. and arrives Lugu Lake at 3:00 P.M., it returns at 11:00 A.M. the next day and arrives Lijiang at 6:00 p.m. From Lijiang Bus Station, there is also a bus going to Ninglang, the journey is 4.5 hours and it costs ¥30. From Ninglang, you can get a bus to Yongning, which can take you to Luoshui or Lige.

Admission: ¥41

Accommodation: There are many hotels and inns in Luoshui and Lige. It costs ¥15 - 30/bed. Inns are also available in Nisai Village and Xiao Luoshui, which are less popular than Luoshui and Lige. Wanting to get to know the locals, some travellers would knock on people's door and they are usually treated with hospitality.





Mt first Visit to Thousand Turtle Mountain

Photos & Article by Liang Meng

Setting off from Lijiang and passing Shigu Town at the first bend of the Yangtze River, I followed Jinzhuang River and travelled 50 km further to the west. Finally, I reached the Laojun Mountain Danxia Landform Scenic Area, which covers an area of more than 240 km². Qiangui ("Thousand Turtle") Mountain is the most famous spot.

As it was low season, the streets of Liming appeared to be very empty, which made us feel good. The Foguang Inn where we stayed is located at the spot where travellers park their cars to start hiking. In the spacious dining room, the inn owner displayed his photos taken on the Thousand Turtle Mountains. We were glad to have the chance to see the magnificent view before climbing the mountain.

The next morning, we got up early. Walking on the stone staircases of 2.5 km long, I felt very hot that my face was as red as the morning sun. Fortunately, the breeze passing through the pine trees cooled me down. Along the handrails, a wooden piper was built to provide fresh and sweet spring water to mountaineers. On the way, I saw deep valleys and limestone caves. Looking around, there were huge trees everywhere, which made me understand the strength and vigor of life. Thanks to the more

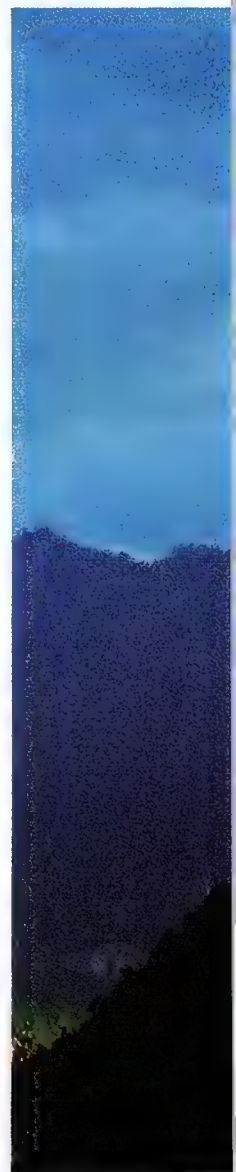
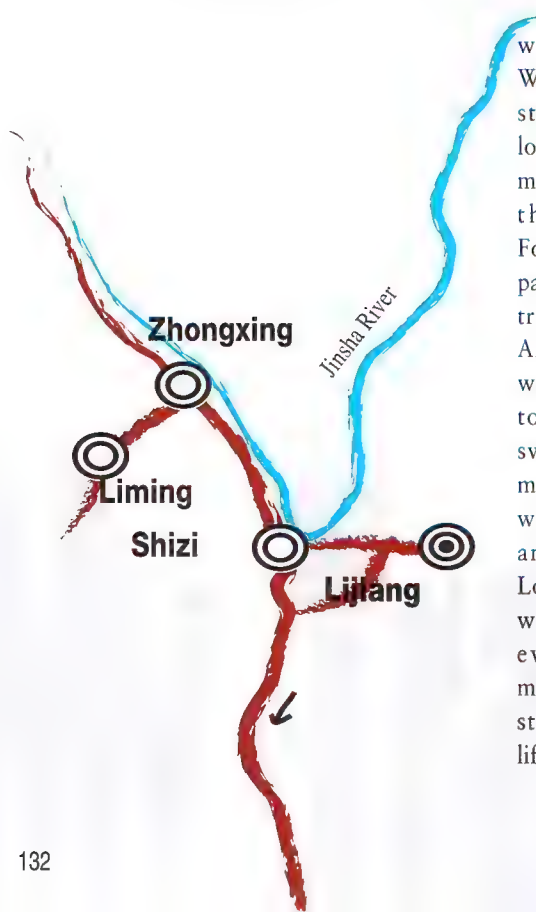
than 2,000 stairs that had led me to this wonderland.

Danxia landform is mostly found in southern China. It is a landscape composed of red rubbles rich with ferric oxide, sands and earthen rocks. In the past millions of years, the crust movements and the erosion of wind and rain molded the stones into such fantastic shape. Laojun Mountain is the largest, highest and most mature danxia landscape area in China. It is the best example of the formation of this landscape. Thousand Turtle Mountain are indeed unique in the world.

Turtles in the Sea of Cloud

After a long walk, we finally reached the peak. With an altitude of 3,000 m, it gives a view of the so-called "Thousand Turtles" landscape. Scattered in the green forest, the red rocks, piling layer upon layer, are very eye-catching. The pine trees growing on the stones are all deformed after years of exposure to the tough environmental condition. The dark red rocks on the top have cracks on it, dividing it into numerous turtle-like stones. When the waves of cloud surge and block the sunshine, the scene of "Thousand Turtles" becomes extremely vivid.

When the setting sun dyes the last rock into red, the land gets back to tranquility. In the school of the mountainous town, students



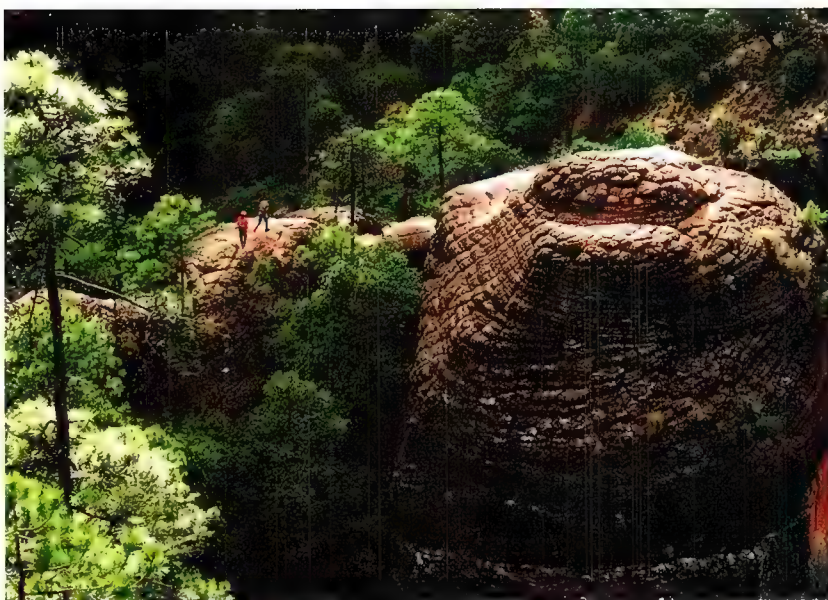
attending the evening classes were reading loud; on the street, people gathered and chatted; in each household, the family gathered to drink tea and watch TV. Life, like the landscapes, is nothing but part of nature.

Travel Tips

Transport Get a bus from Kunming to Lijiang (¥160), where has buses departing for Liming (¥50).

Food & Accommodation: Both are convenient. In the low season (November to April), it costs about ¥15/bed.

Note: The road leading to the peak is in good condition. Travellers can bring some water and snacks. If time allows, Liming Scenic Area is worth visiting.



Nam Co with a Different Look

Photos & Article by Qi Pingshu



To most travellers, Nam Co is a must-visit part of Lhasa. I do not like to rush my journey, so I decided to camp by the lake. This way, I could admire the particular scenery of the sacred lake.

Nam Co is not far from Lhasa, that a journey by car only takes three hours. The road, being a part of the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, is in good condition. As soon as we drove out of Lhasa, the sky and land became much broader. In the fields along the road, crops were green and strong; in the wilderness, flowers of various colours were in full blossom.

After a while, the summit of Mt. Nyainqentanglha came to sight. We immediately stopped the car and walked around a

bunch of Buddhist streamer. After Damxung, we left the Qinghai-Tibet Highway and drove into a mountainous road leading to the lake. The sublime landscape on the way made us forget about the bumping drive. When we passed the last hill and saw the vast flat land of Nam Co, we all screamed with joy and forgot the headache we were suffering due to the high altitude.

When we reached our destination and saw the rocks of Praying Palms, we could not help acclaiming Nature's beauty. We prayed sincerely with our fingers crossed. Following a trail at the foot of the hill, we joined the locals in circling the Zhaxi Peninsula. On the way, we looked at the lake from different angles. In the end, with all the strength left, we struggled to climb onto the hill on Zhaxi Peninsula, which gives us a magnificent view of Nam Co.

A Risky Cruise on the Lake

My friend and I found a small boat and we rowed to the centre of the lake, where offers visitors the panoramic view of Nam Co. After half an hour, we landed on the isle. To our surprise, there were groups of Mani stones, which meant there were people





visiting frequently. The flat isle was covered by green plant, with Mt. Nyainqentanglha in the blue sky. It was getting dark when we left the isle, the colour of the lake had turned slightly darker. Watching the Zhaxi Peninsula from the lake, the view appeared different. In the setting sun, the land shined like red fire surrounded by blue water. Such a view looked particularly distinctive under the blue sky. When we were getting close to the shore, the boat was shaking in strong wind and high waves. Even worse, as the water was shallow, the boat was often stranded and we had to jump into the chilly water to push the boat. Since the water of Nam Co is from the snowy mountain, you can imagine how icy it is.

Back on the shore, we set up our tent in twilight and cooked our meal. Due to the high altitude, we had to use high-pressure cooker, otherwise the rice could not be cooked. The Tibetans built their tents here as well.

Sleepless in the Moonlight

A walk on the lakeside after dinner is an enjoyment. When we were walking, we heard noisy music coming from a hill by



the lake. The locals' dancing party had started. A bonfire brightened every enthusiastic face. People were dancing with their hands joined. Their songs went afar. We joined the dancing party, though we did not know their dance. The dark sky was clear and there was only the big moon hanging high.

I had never seen a moon so big, so round and so bright. It is probably because Tibet is the roof of the earth, making the heaven almost touchable. The distant snowy mountain appeared soft while the water of Nam Co glistened like a huge gemstone. I stayed up for the whole night since I did not want to miss any precious moment.

In fact, it was hard to fall asleep in high altitude area. I woke up again and again due to the lack of oxygen. This did not bother me at all. Camping by the lake, I could enjoy the peace and beauty of nature when I listened to the sounds of water beating the banks.

Travel Tips

Transport: Nam Co can be reached from Damxung. The Qinghai-Tibet Highway is a well-maintained tar-coated road. It is 170 km from Lhasa to Damxung and takes about two hours. The 60 km road from Damxung to Nam Co is earthen, and the drive takes more than an hour. The 5,200 m high Nagen Pass is on the way. There are buses running to Damxung from both Lhasa and Nagqu, but to get to Nam Co, hiring a car is the only choice.

Accommodation: Tents and food are available at Nam Co, but conditions are crude. Beware of the high altitude (4,718 m) — bring warm clothes and oxygen. It is possible to have a one-day tour.

Autumn in **Hongcun Village**

Photos & Article by Yifu

Visitors to the Hongcun Village mainly come for its ancient dwellings of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The autumn scenery in the surrounding area is also breathtaking, especially when the leaves turn red in November.

It was lunchtime when I arrived Hongcun Village. Puzzled by the labyrinth-like streets and lanes, I called the travel agency and asked them to send me a guide.

The Dream of Ancient Charm

Huaidetang, the guesthouse I stayed, is an old mansion of medium size. Though it has no colourful design or decoration, it has all the characteristics of an Anhui mansion. Inside the gate,

there is a small garden; on its left are a pond and a waterside pavilion. Behind the garden, there are the lobby and the dining room separated by a courtyard, where calligraphy and paintings are hung on the walls. Guestrooms are on both sides of the lobby. The room I stayed was small and gloomy, but the old carved bed gave me a nostalgic dream.

The most charming moment of Hongcun Village happens at dawn. In the sunrays, when a veil of mist drifts on the South Lake, with the vague arched bridge and the distant hills in the



background, it looks exactly like a traditional Chinese painting. At the same time, the Yuezhao Lake at the centre of the village is as smooth as a mirror. The ancient Anhui-style mansions on the banks look particularly beautiful under the soft sunshine. However, when the morning comes, groups of tourists arrive, and the village is not peaceful anymore.

We hired a car to visit Mukeng and Tachuan, two small towns nearby. We first drove on a winding road and later turned to a narrow lane, which is only wide enough for two people to walk side by side. The pebble road is not only steep but has many turns.

The car stopped when there was still a distance to Mukeng. We walked through the bamboo groves, which is said to be one of the filming sites of the movie "Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon". I climbed to the top of a mound to have a panoramic view. In the surrounding area, valleys, slopes and hills were all covered in green. The thick bamboo groves looked like rainforests.

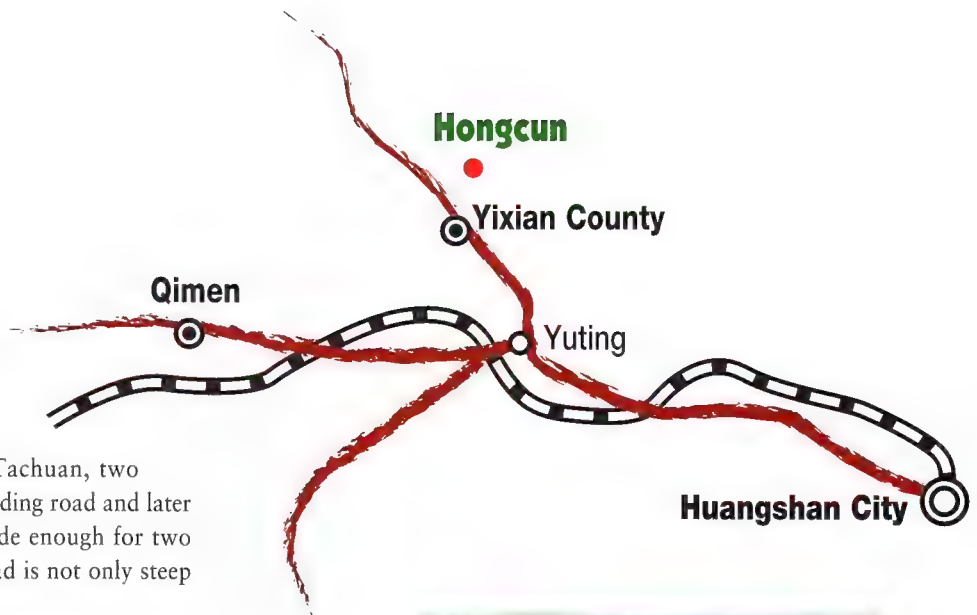
Following a trail in the bamboo groves, we advanced towards Mukeng. On the slopes, fellers with strong legs carried huge bamboo on their shoulders and walked easily. The houses here are not as exquisitely built as those in Hongcun Village, probably due to their remote location in the deep mountains.

Red Leaves in Tachuan and Lucun

After visiting Mukeng, we hurried to Tachuan at the hill foot. The village is free from travellers usually, but in autumn, it attracts a lot of photographers. A few years ago, pictures of Tachuan are published in a local magazine, and it became a popular site for photography. The trees with red leaves are not maples, but ebonies with heart-shaped leaves. The groves are not linked to form a sea of forest, but they have their distinctive charm.

In Lucun Village, there are also red leaves. There is a wooden tower with carved decorations, which is the mansion of a former rich merchant in the village. Its wooden carvings are as brilliant as those of Chengzhitang in Hongcun Village. The carved doors and windows are even more delicate than those of the imperial palace. Unfortunately, most engravings were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976).

When I was leaving, I saw some red leaves behind the houses. After walking through vegetable fields and passing numerous lanes, I finally found the sight of red leaves that I had



dreamed to see. Though I had seen red leaves in various places, including mountains and temple, the autumn scenes in Lucun Village gave me a completely new feeling.

When the leaves are falling and the sky is clear, it is perhaps the best time to visit Hongcun Village.

Travel Tips

Transport: From Tunxi (Huangshan City), take a bus to Yixian County. At the bus station, you may find a farmer's car to take you to Hongcun Village for ¥2; the ride will be 10 minutes. At the entrance of the village, there are cars for hire. It costs ¥40 - 50 to hire a car to Mukeng and Tachuan and ¥20 to Lucun Village.

Accommodation: In low seasons, it costs ¥50/person to stay with the local (meals included). It is better to ask the family to pick you up as it is not easy to find the way in the village.

Huaidelang: (559) 554 1152; Jushantang: (559) 554 1218;

Shurentang: (559) 554 1009.

The White World of **Twin Peaks**

Photos by He Zhongyun, Zhang Bin · Article by He Zhongyun



Mt. Laotuding, with an altitude of 1,699 m, is located in Hailin, Mudanjiang, Heilongjiang. It is the source of Hailang River, a tributary of Mudan River. At its foot, there is a forest farm called Shuangfeng with about 100 households. From September to May, Shuangfeng Forest Farm is coated in heavy snow. It is a paradise for photographers and ski fans.

Surrounded by mountains, the farm is situated in the valley of Mt. Laotuding, with Hailang River running through the village. From autumn to the next spring, the whole village at the foot of the mountain will be completely covered by heavy snow. The snow here is sticky, making it easy to pile layer upon layer on trees, roofs and grasses.

A Silvery Wonderland

The local people are used to the snow. In winter, their houses often disappear in the white world with only the door and the windows left, but they do not care that much. When they go out, they have to dig out a trail. It might be the reason for this village to remain under-developed.

In Shuangfeng, the scenery and local customs are indeed captivating. It snowed the night before we arrived; the purified land glistened in silvery light. It was a sunny day and the small village nested in the valley seemed to become a land of silver. Standing on a small hill outside the village, I saw the white dome of Mt. Laotuding. There was a path connecting the mountain and the village, and the houses along it were wrapped in heavy snow. Beside the spruce wood, there was a snow-carved train carrying timbers made by the workers. Horse-drawn sleds were riding between the mountain and the ski court, while children were playing in the snow, riding on

their small sleds or making snowman.

The Heated Brick-Bed

I stayed with a worker's family for the night. Through the window, I saw the moon rise from the ski courses, and lightened the village. The night in a snow world was particularly tranquil.

We had our dinner on the warm heated brick-bed. The dishes included chicken stewed with mushrooms, scrambled eggs with black fungus and cold dishes made of wild vegetables. The locally brew beer made the meal even more satisfactory. The warm bed, which could not be found in the city, drove away all my fatigue.

Wuchang

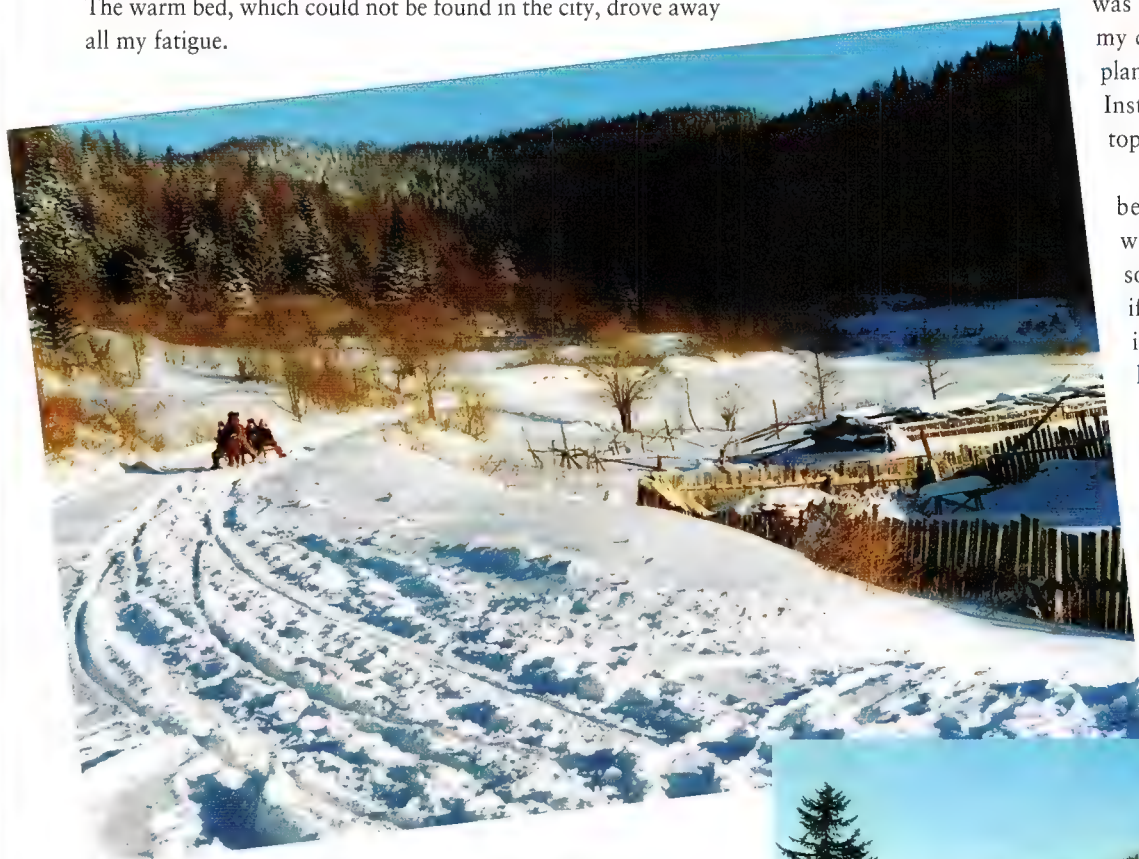
Mt. Laotuding

Hailin

The next morning, the snow was so thick that over half of the willows were buried. When I got out of the door, the snow was so deep that it went up to my chest. I had to give up my plan of climbing the mountain. Instead, I took a sled to the top.

Hailang River had also become a track of snow, where you could hear the sound of snow melting. But if one fell into the river, the ice cover might crack. The local forest workers had to cross the river by stepping on stones.

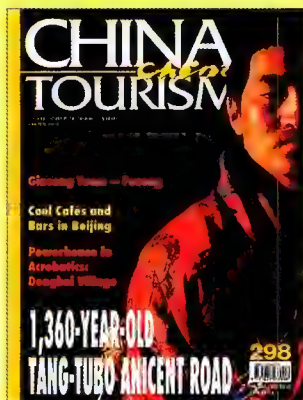
Hailin is a world of white snow and colourful customs. This fairyland remains one of my sweetest travel memories.



Travel Tips

Transport: It takes about four hours from Harbin to Hailin by bus. In Hailin, there are buses going to Mt. Laotuding directly.

Accommodation: Staying with the local people allows travellers to see more of Hailin, though hotels for all budgets are available in the city.



Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

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Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.

Feature Story: **Twenty-Five Dream Chasers in China**

On the 25th birthday of China Tourism, we have 25 people to share with us their unique dreams in China. These are the doctor who travels to the poorest areas to take care of patients, a journalist who has a passion for China news, an American who falls in love with guqin (the ancient musical instrument), a photographer who records the Yellow River and Yangtze River. From poet and live Buddha's wife to high school student and social worker, these people and their dreams will present you a valid picture of today's China.

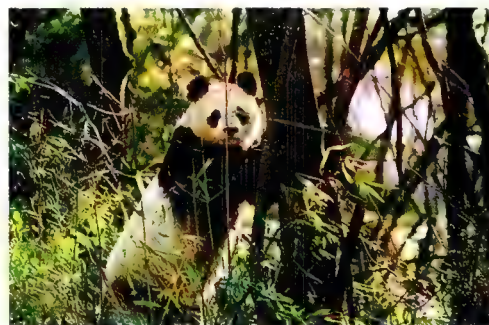


Customs: **Ao'bao Sacrificial Ceremony in Inner Mongolia**

Situated in Dongwumuqin Banner, east Inner Mongolia, Baiyin Ao'bao has its Ao'bao Sacrificial Ceremony every July. A week before the ceremony, people are already busy with preparations. Lamas are invited to recite prayers during the ceremony, and traditional Mongolian sports, such as horse racing and wrestling are going on.

Nature: **The Legend of Panda**

As a professional wildlife photographer, the author has spent six years living in the Giant Panda Natural Reserve in Wolong, Sichuan, to capture the most precious moments of giant pandas. The author lives in caves, eats the simplest food, and almost lives with the pandas; the photos show his love for the animal. Don't miss this story, and travel with the author into the world of giant pandas.



Culture: **The Paper Making Business of Tantou**

Tantou in Longhui County, Hunan, is an ancient town surrounded by bamboo forest. In the past hundred years, bamboos provide a natural resource to the town's paper making business. Today, Tantou's paper products have even expanded to the overseas market.

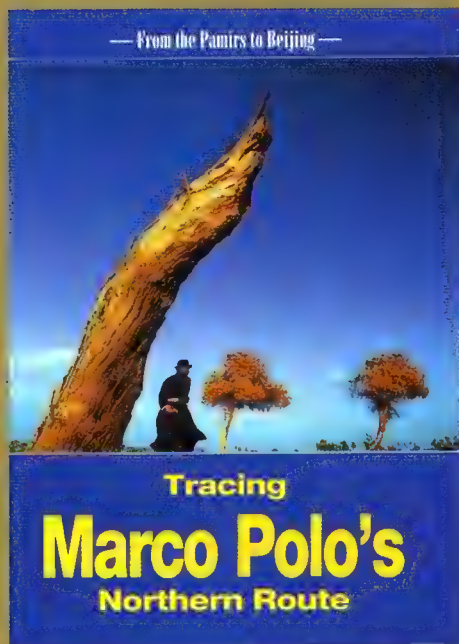
Photographic & Practical Guides for Your China Tours

Before you set off for your perfect journey, you may have to prepare your itinerary carefully. Each of the following recommended readings offers different types of information which cater to our readers' various interests: exploring, photography, or tourist information. They will be great guides to your China tours.

Tracing Marco Polo's Northern Route

A record of an 80-day journey in which our authors drive their jeep 12,000 km long through the northern regions of China following in the footsteps of Marco Polo's historic journey from the Pamir Highland to Beijing. In a medley of images and words, we present you with the fascinating scenery and various ways of life in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet.

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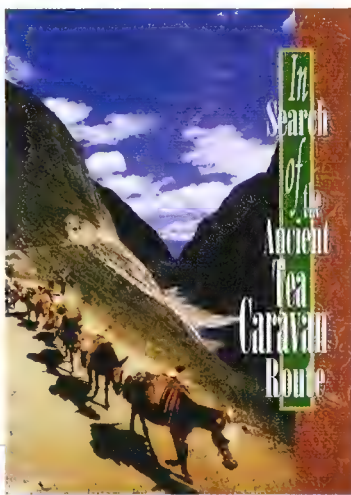


In Search of the Ancient Tea Caravan Route

The ancient Tea Caravan Route can be traced back to 2,000 years ago, starting from Xishuangbanna at China's southwestern end, passing through boundless forests and valleys to the Sino-Indian, Nepalese and Sikkimese borders on Tibet, the "Roof of the World".

This book is not-to-be-missed by every daring adventurer.

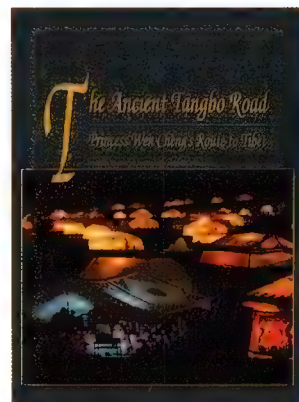
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The Ancient Tangbo Road

Covering four provinces including Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and the Tibet Autonomous Region, the ancient Tangbo Road was created on the map when Princess Wen Cheng was sent as a bride to Luoxie (present-day Lhasa) during the Tang Dynasty. Our photographers and writers, who have followed this arduous route, present you the graceful sights and unique ethnic customs on the way.

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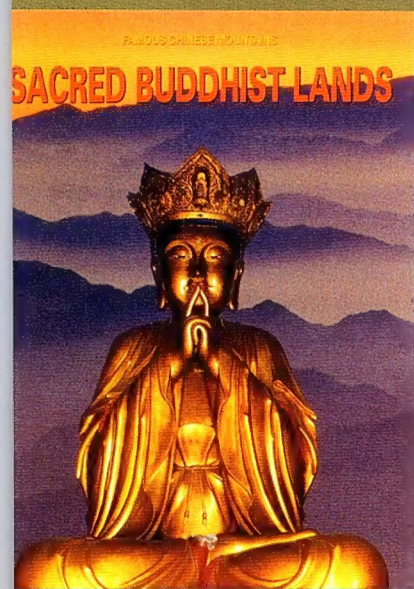


Guide to Xinjiang

This book is especially designated for DIY travellers who desire to explore the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. There are detailed introduction to scenic spots in five main areas in Xinjiang including Urümqi, Turpan, Southern and Northern Xinjiang, and Central Tianshan. Practical tourist information on accommodation, ticketing, shopping, local specialty, as well as travel tips are covered.

HK\$96





Sacred Buddhist Lands

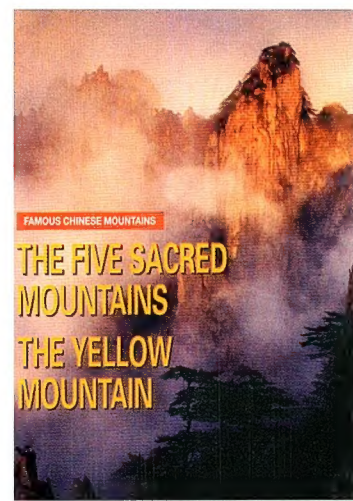
Buddhism in China is inevitably linked with some of the country's best known mountains. And going deep in the mountains and far away from civilization is an ideal place for retreat. Belonging to the four Bodhisattvas respectively, the four most famous Buddhist mountains — Wutai, Jiuhua, Putuo and Emei — are nestled with numerous monasteries and nunneries which have been worshipped by pilgrims for thousands of years. Tourists to these places will totally be soaked in "Kingdoms of Buddhism".

HK\$156

The Five Sacred Mountains The Yellow Mountain

Located in five provinces in China, every of the Five Sacred Mountains — Taishan, Hengshan, Songshan, Hengshan and Huashan — has its magnificent natural and cultural landscapes. Besides, Huangshan (Yellow Mountain), is also famous for its spectacular rocks, pine trees, and sea of clouds. It will be a great enjoyment in reading both the detailed text and remarkable images by our experienced photographers as recorded in this book.

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FOCUS ON XINJIANG

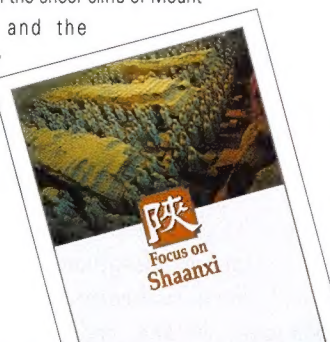
On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, all providing tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem embedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak, the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik,

Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique and colourful culture.



FOCUS ON SHAANXI

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.



FOCUS ON YUNNAN

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate all year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-la, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.



The Call of China's West

FOCUS ON TIBET

The Tibet Autonomous Region of China is a land of mystery for tourists, a land of wonders for explorers, a land of purity for Buddhists, and the ultimate challenge for mountaineers. Its beautiful landscapes, unique geographical features and rich cultural legacy continue to attract an increasing number of visitors.

The countless attractions of Tibet make it impossible to include them all in one book. This photographic publication offers an introduction to some of the Region's most celebrated features: the Potala Palace and its precious collection of cultural relics; the Jokhang Temple with strings of worshippers prostrating themselves before it; the Shoton Festival and the Sunning of Buddha ceremony; the ruins of the mystical Guge Kingdom; and the amazing Qiangtang Grassland....

At the same time, *Focus on Tibet* outlines the six major routes to Tibet and the many stunning landscapes found along the way.



Paperback Only

FOCUS ON GUIZHOU

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.



FOCUS ON GUANGXI

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the diverse traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.



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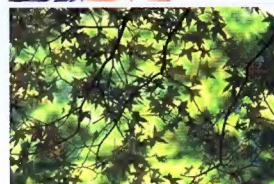
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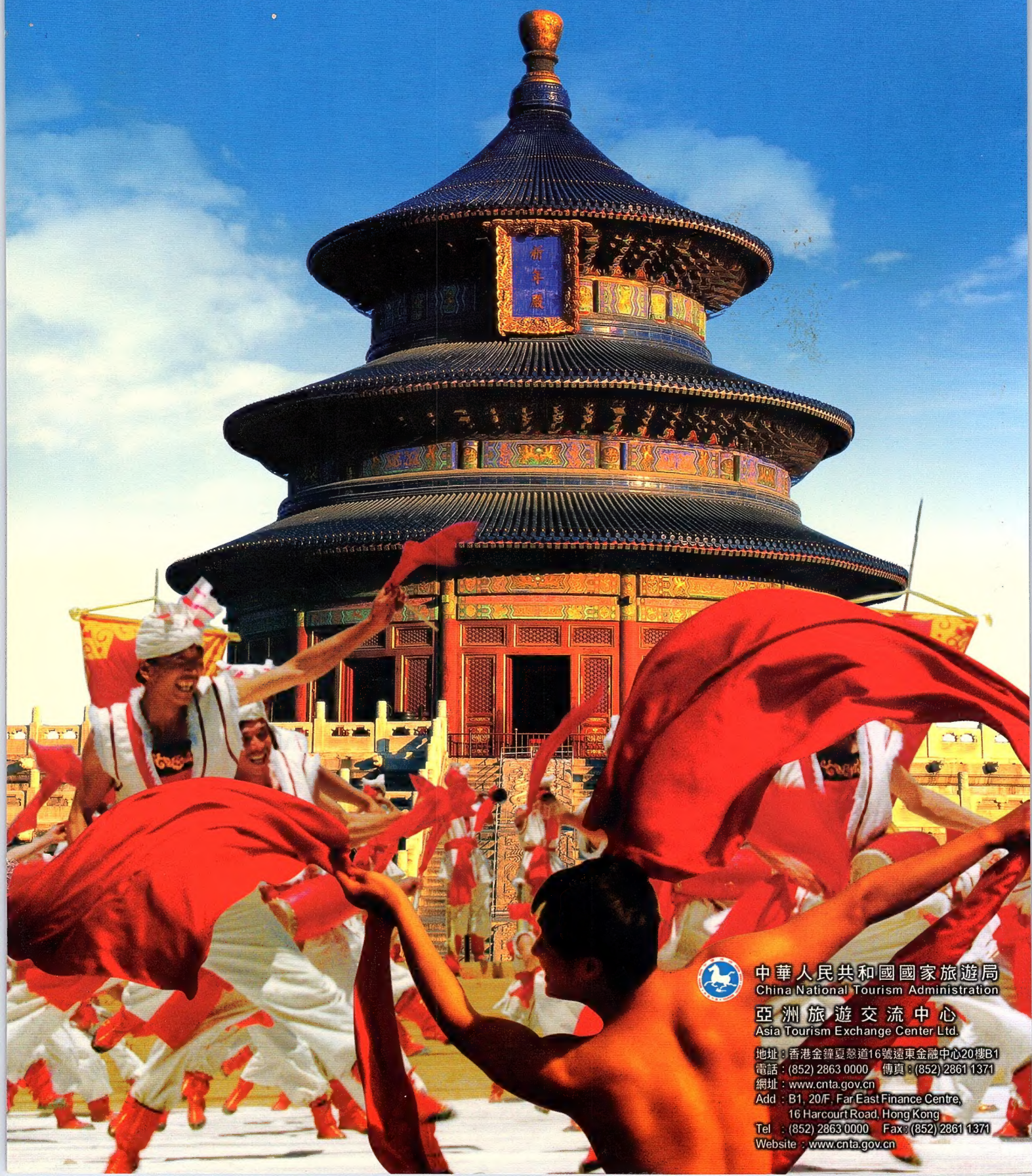
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